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ABSTRACT

This manual is designed to guide the implementation of the Joining Forces Program, a comprehensive improvement process for secondary schools. Implementation of the program requires the cooperative effort of the local school district, state and local education associations, and the administration and staff of participating schools. Joining Forces is a result of a careful review of available research on effective schools and other organizations, studies of the processes of change in secondary schools, and knowledge of exemplary organizational practices. Organizational diagnosis using factors based on research is combined with intensive team building, priority setting, and problem-solving techniques to produce an individualized improvement plan and building commitment to that plan which meets the needs of the total school community. Manual sections discuss: program rationale, principles, and goals; cooperative agreements; orientation; coordinating council formation; creation of the school profile; council retreat; task group formation; action strategy and improvement plan; presentation of plan; implementation; evaluation; and revision and renewal. Sample survey materials are included. (CB)

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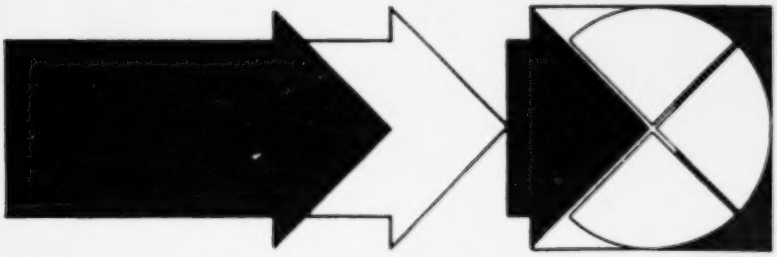
JOINING FORCES



A TEAM APPROACH TO SECONDARY SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Prepared

by

Rima Miller

with

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JOINING FORCES has been developed by Research for Better Schools, Inc. (RBS) in cooperation with the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) with support from the National Institute of Education. Implementation of the program requires the cooperative effort of RBS, the local school district, the state and local education associations, and the administration and staff of the participating schools.

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JOINING FORCES
Manual Overview

Joining Forces (JF) is a comprehensive improvement process for secondary schools. This manual, **JOINING FORCES: A TEAM APPROACH TO SECONDARY SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT**, has been developed to guide the implementation of this program, which involves a series of activities. Accordingly, the manual is presented to follow those activities.

The first section provides potential users with a discussion of the rationale underlying the program, the program goals, and a brief description of the activities and events involved. The subsequent sections correspond to the activities and include materials and processes that could be used to implement the program.

The sections are as follows:

- Rationale; Principles; Goals; and Program Description
- Cooperative Agreements - A discussion of constituent groups that participate in the program and a sample contract for all involved parties to sign.
- Orientation - A brief outline of the goals of an orientation program, a sample design, and some suggested handout materials.
- Coordinating Council Formation - Guidelines for council selection, the role of the council, and responsibilities of council members.
- Creating the School Profile - Two sample instruments: School Profile and School Assessment Survey.
- Council Retreat - A discussion of objectives to be accomplished and prioritizing and problem-solving approaches.
- Task Group Formation - An outline of the roles and responsibilities of task group members, recruitment ideas for increasing membership, and techniques for problem solving.
- Action Strategy and Improvement Plan - Guidelines for developing a school improvement plan.

- **Presentation of Plan** - Suggestions for organizing for the presentation, organization of the presentation, cast of characters, and methods of delivery.

- **Implementation** - Outline for implementation analysis and planning.

- **Evaluation** - Organization of evaluation, data collection, and presentation guides.

- **Revision and Renewal** - Concluding and summarizing comments and related activities.

The manual is designed so that new materials can be included as the program progresses. Materials can be reproduced if used for educational and/or training purposes. However, duplicated materials must be properly cited.

JOINING FORCES is a result of a careful review of available research on effective schools and other organizations, studies of the processes of change in secondary schools, knowledge of exemplary organizational practices, and experience working in a variety of secondary schools. One of the program's major strengths lies in its flexibility which permits adaptation to meet the needs, constraints, and work culture of the schools that elect to participate in the improvement process. Organizational diagnosis using factors based on research is combined with intensive team building, priority setting, and problem-solving techniques to produce an individualized improvement plan and building commitment to that plan which meets the needs of the total school community.➡

Organizational effectiveness at achieving objectives is typically the result of high productivity by the people in the organization. Researchers have found that the productivity of a work force is affected by the characteristics of the work tasks and the work setting (Miller & Wilson, 1984). Effective schools, like other productive organizations have a work environment characterized by clear goals, a high task orientation, frequent feedback on performance, high levels of employee discretion, stress on cooperation and teamwork, positive relations between management and staff, adequate resources, and assertive/visible leadership. The critical conditions that motivate and satisfy employees are provided in effective schools. There is a sense of achievement, there is recognition of performance, the work is not narrowly prescribed, and staff members participate in decisions affecting their work. When teachers and students are given such incentives, their productivity increases and student achievement rises.

Many school districts are unable to provide the conditions conducive to high productivity. In some cases, management is too autocratic. In others, resources may be inadequate or allocated with too little thought to educational goals. Teachers often feel isolated and their achievements or efforts may go unrecognized. In the schools, goals may be vague, discipline poorly enforced, and absenteeism high.

From this perspective, the problems facing school administrators working to create more effective schools are similar to those confronting business executives seeking higher productivity. While there are some obvious differences in the situations of the two groups, there are also significant parallels. Increased student learning requires increased work

effort by both students and staff. More productive work requires changes in competence, motivation, opportunities, or resources. And, in effective schools, as in other organizations, the efforts of many workers must be orchestrated into a harmonious whole. This requires leadership, good management, and a positive work climate.

In the private sector, efforts to raise productivity by improving the quality of work life are now commonplace and many have been successful. These efforts have not been limited to assembly line workers; they have been used to improve the performance of white-collar workers and professionals as well. Redesign of jobs to make them more intrinsically motivating and to provide better opportunities for growth, the creation of work groups to provide peer support and greater variety in tasks, increased participation in decision making through the use of quality circles or similar structures, and development of new career ladders are among the strategies that have been employed. Underlying these approaches is a recognition that the problems of ineffectiveness are exacerbated by reducing employee discretion, neglecting to tap and develop employee abilities, and failing to recognize people's need to gain satisfaction from their work.

Educators should examine these approaches carefully, adapt them for use in school settings, and set up and monitor pilot projects to test their efficacy. New curricula and new technology alone are unlikely to alleviate the root causes of ineffectiveness in our schools. The problems facing the schools are not simply curricular (i.e., newer and better classroom materials) or instructional (i.e., more knowledgeably trained teachers). There is a growing body of literature that suggests school improvement

requires attention to organizational issues as well (Rutter, Maugham, Mortimer, Outson, & Smith, 1979; Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbacker 1979; Edmonds, 1979). The influence of human factors on school effectiveness must be recognized and addressed. Work environments must be created that are conducive to high productivity. This may require challenging sacred school traditions and routines, and it may require changes in the management of schools.

A school must provide an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Where such an atmosphere exists, one usually observes the following conditions (Clark, Lotto, & Astuto, 1984):

- First, school staff demonstrate a shared commitment to their work, an attitude that is shared by students.

- Second, there are uniformly high expectations about behavior and performance. Individual staff and students have a keen sense of personal efficacy and have high expectations of those around them. This means that school members more readily assume responsibility for results and are more willing to take risks to address important problems.

- Third, the best-run schools are action oriented. Staff want to succeed and eagerly address the problems that stand in the way of their success. As Peters and Waterman (1982) note about productive companies, a not uncommon motto is "ready, fire, aim."

- Fourth, the leadership of these institutions has the discretionary authority to permit outstanding faculty to do what must be done to provide students a good education. This includes working arrangements that allow considerable professional autonomy, especially with respect to classroom decisions about how best to teach, and the creation of opportunities for students and teachers to work together outside of the classroom.

- Fifth, productive schools have a clear focus. Strict attention is paid to teaching and learning tasks. This need not mean a rigid curriculum as the focus is on development of talent as well as on content. Extraneous activities assume a clearly subservient posture, if they exist at all.

- Sixth, the school's climate is such that all people in the building are able to experience satisfaction -- students, teachers, and administrators alike. For this to occur, a school must be a place where recognition for effort and good performance is standard operating procedure and where such recognition is meaningful.

- Finally, effective schools create and make use of organizational slack. They find the time and resources to allow trials (successes and failures), redundancy, and experimentation. Moreover, organizational recognition is provided for "good tries" that do not work out as well as brilliant successes.

Interwoven with these seven factors are two additional characteristics: a consensus about core values and purposes and a willingness to act on these beliefs. Traces of the seven characteristics listed above may be found in some quantity in many schools, for example, a particularly energetic grade-level team or department. What sets highly productive schools apart from less productive ones is not so much the presence of particular values, norms, and beliefs as that staff and students in effective school not only espouse them, but live them. Productive schools have a strong and distinctive system of values or culture.

JOINING FORCES is an effort to address these issue through a program in which management and labor cooperate to improve the quality of school worklife for both staff and students, and seek to alter the effectiveness of the school through both social and technical innovations.

The program is founded upon well-established premises arising from both research and experience. These include:

- Satisfaction of teachers increases when they believe they can influence particular aspects of the organizations decision making (Hornstein, Callahan, Fisch, & Benedict, 1968).

- Planning and problem solving at the building level can result in successful implementation of a new educational practice (Crandall & Loucks, 1983).

- School organizations can become many times more effective if they make use of the resources that lie within them and use these resources in opening up the decision-making and influence processes (Schmuck, Runkel, Saturen, Martell, & Derr 1972).

- Commitment is essential to renewal and commitment is created through participation, sharing, and a common purpose (Fullan, Miles, & Taylor, 1980).

- Improved organizational climate will produce improved classroom climate and more classroom innovation (Keys, 1979; Miles, 1965).

The school is the critical unit of change in Joining Forces and there are certain conditions that must be met if the program is to have a high probability for success. Key roles and responsibilities must be defined and accepted. The school principal must work with a coordinating-and-decision-making group within the school and accept the involvement of teachers and even students (Bassin & Gross, 1978). Teachers and students must accept the responsibility for making constructive criterion and working to implement agreed upon solutions. The district must provide ongoing support and encouragement (Scheinfeld, 1979).

School administrators need the input and support of teachers to bring about changes in policy and practice. Teachers cannot implement such changes unless they have opportunities to learn new skills, work with their peers, and develop some sense of "commitment" to the new programs. Teachers must see improvements as practical, given their workload, and as helpful in making them more effective in the classroom. And management must increase its understanding of and sensitivity to the relationship among workload, working conditions, and effectiveness.

The potential benefits of JOINING FORCES can be examined on three levels; there should be effects on conditions in the school, on the attitudes and performance of staff and students, and on district operations.

Of course, increased student learning is the ultimate goal of improving school effectiveness. But learning is a joint product of school staff and students. The amount of learning is influenced by their abilities, their levels of efforts, and the character of their interaction. Actions taken by school staff can only increase the likelihood of increased learning; they do not guarantee it. Similarly, actions at the district level can influence policies and practices at the building level but provide no guarantee of effectiveness.

The approach proposed herein does not place the blame for low productivity on either the teachers or the school administrators but suggests that the two groups must learn to work together to surmount those organizational conditions that get in the way of learning. Unless both groups learn to compromise, attempts at improvement are doomed to produce trivial results. Also, this approach does not place the blame for poor results on the students. Certainly student effort and motivation are essential to the achievement of academic goals, but it is the responsibility of adults to create environments in which students are stimulated to make their best efforts. There is no universal panacea that will render all schools effective, no simple formula for success that can be applied to all schools. School staffs must be willing to commit to long-term efforts to meet the unique mix of challenges they face in their schools.

Secondary schools can become more effective through the creation of organizational structures, procedures, and policies that make better use of their human resources and encourage staff and students to be more productive. A new climate must be created, one that fosters cooperation and defines higher expectations for staff and students. Such a climate can

occur only where people are willing to set aside the barriers that divide them and join in a common cause to enhance learning. This is the purpose of the program described in this manual.➨

JOINING FORCES Principles *

- Adopt a positive philosophy of a clear purpose toward educational improvement.
- Maintain high expectations about student and teacher performance. We can no longer live with commonly accepted delays, mistakes, and poor workmanship.
- Stop depending on word of mouth and informal measures. Require evidence that quality is built in. Depend on meaningful measures of quality.
- Find problems! Continually work on the system to find and solve problems.
- Institute effective methods of supervision and staff development.
- Break down barriers between departments. People must work as a team to foresee problems and opportunities.
- Remove barriers that stand between teachers and their right to pride of profession.
- Create a management structure that promotes and supports these Joining Forces Principles. ➨

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*Adapted from the Alcoa News, March 1984.

JOINING FORCES
Program Goal

The program's goal is to create a more effective school by:

- increasing staff consensus about the school mission, enhancing the commitment to that mission, and creating a tighter alignment between the mission and the curriculum and other services provided by the school;

- developing and implementing a structure for participatory decision making and planning and increasing the school's capacity to define and solve problems; and

- improving internal communications, cooperation, and coordination, thereby creating an organizational climate that fosters a sense of community, pride, and achievement.

JOINING FORCES
Program Description

JOINING FORCES is an organizational improvement program for secondary schools. The improvement process involves a series of activities that are described in the materials that follow. The program assumes there is a desire on the part of school and school district staff to involve themselves in a long-term, planned change effort to improve the quality of school life for staff and students. The program begins with the development of a school profile and a diagnosis of conditions within the school. The data are analyzed and fed back to the school staff to stimulate a collective diagnosis of issues and problems in the school. This is the first step in a repetitive cycle of priority setting, problem solving, and planning.

Central to the program is the formation of the Coordinating Council, a representative body of the staff that works with the principal to lead the improvement/development activities. The council collects the data relative to the conditions within the school, analyzes the results, defines priority areas, and, very importantly, recruits task groups made up of staff volunteers who study the problems and make recommendations for action. The Coordinating Council then makes its own recommendations to the school administration. The administration accepts the obligation of considering the recommendations and responding in a timely manner. If the administration decides to modify or reject specific recommendations, it accepts the further obligation of meeting with the council to explain and discuss its position. Once plans are approved, the council works with the administration to develop staff, student, and community support; initiate the needed activities; monitor implementation; and evaluate the results.

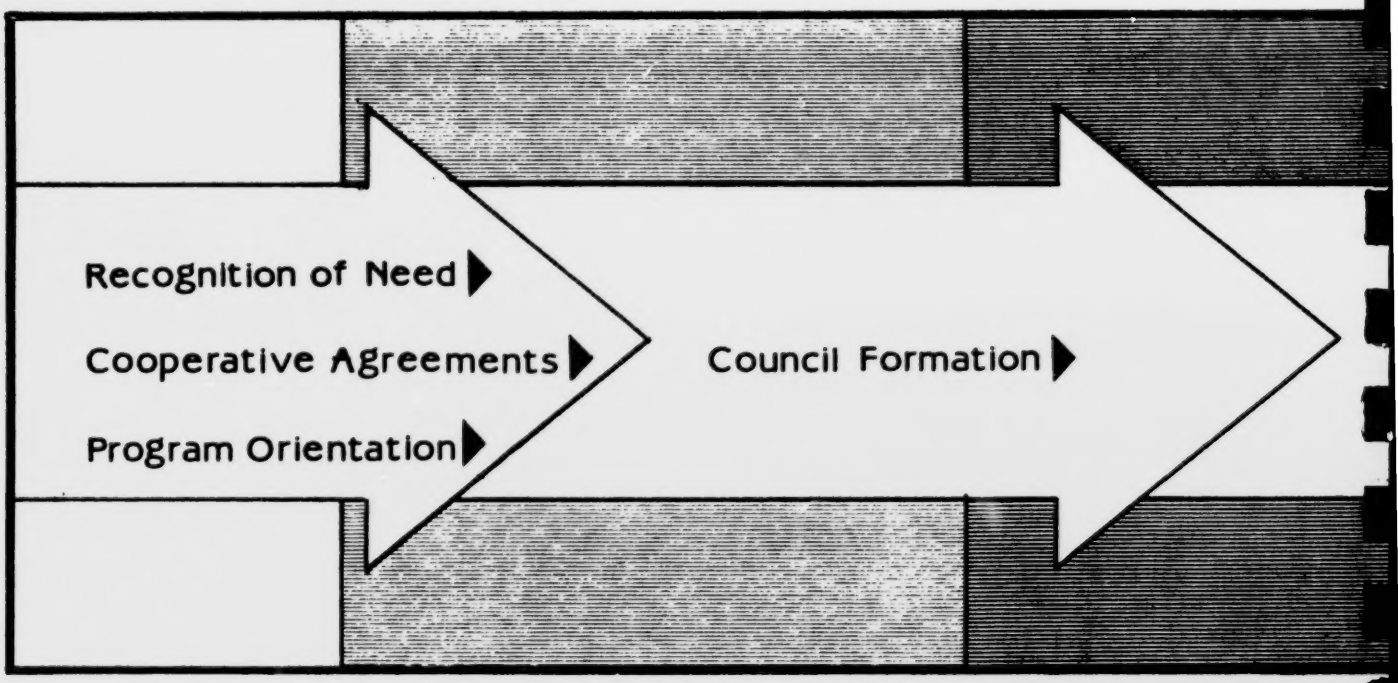
A school involved with the development program may benefit from the use of outside consultants who can assist with data collection and analysis and provide training to the council in group management, problem solving, and planning. However, it is the council and the school administration who direct the improvement process. Consultants serve in facilitative or support capacities.

A major ingredient for successful implementation of improvement plans is the involvement of the total school "community" in the improvement of the school's effectiveness. **JOINING FORCES** is based on the premise that schools can become more effective by making better use of their human resources, by opening up the decision-making/influence process, and by focusing their improvement efforts on a few critical areas at a time. This process of participation and the collaborative problem solving improves the quality of worklife in the school, revitalizes staff creativity and commitment, and unleashes new energies to solve everyday problems.

The chances for positive changes increase when the entire staff works together toward common goals. School facilities that embark upon such a development process can anticipate higher staff morale, improved relationships between teaching staff and the administration, more effective communication, an improved learning environment, and increased academic achievement.

The development process envisioned here is not a quick fix. Rather it is a deliberate, ongoing, structured approach to planned change. The program follows a set of activities that serve as a framework for organizing school development activities. As successes occur, commitment to the program will increase and so will participation. Success should

build upon success and, hopefully, the end result will be a more effective school in which improvement is an ongoing goal and where the decision making and planning processes permit continued adaptation to an ever-changing environment.➨



- **Recognition of Need**

  The school recognizes its need for improvement and makes the decision to consider participating in the Joining Forces Program.

- **Cooperative Agreements**

  Representatives of the local school district, the local education association, the local board of education, and the state education association agree to fulfill the obligations of the Joining Forces Program.

- **Orientation**

  A Joining Forces presentation, including the program overview, goals, roles of participants, and anticipated outcomes, is conducted for school staff members.

- **Coordinating Council Formation**

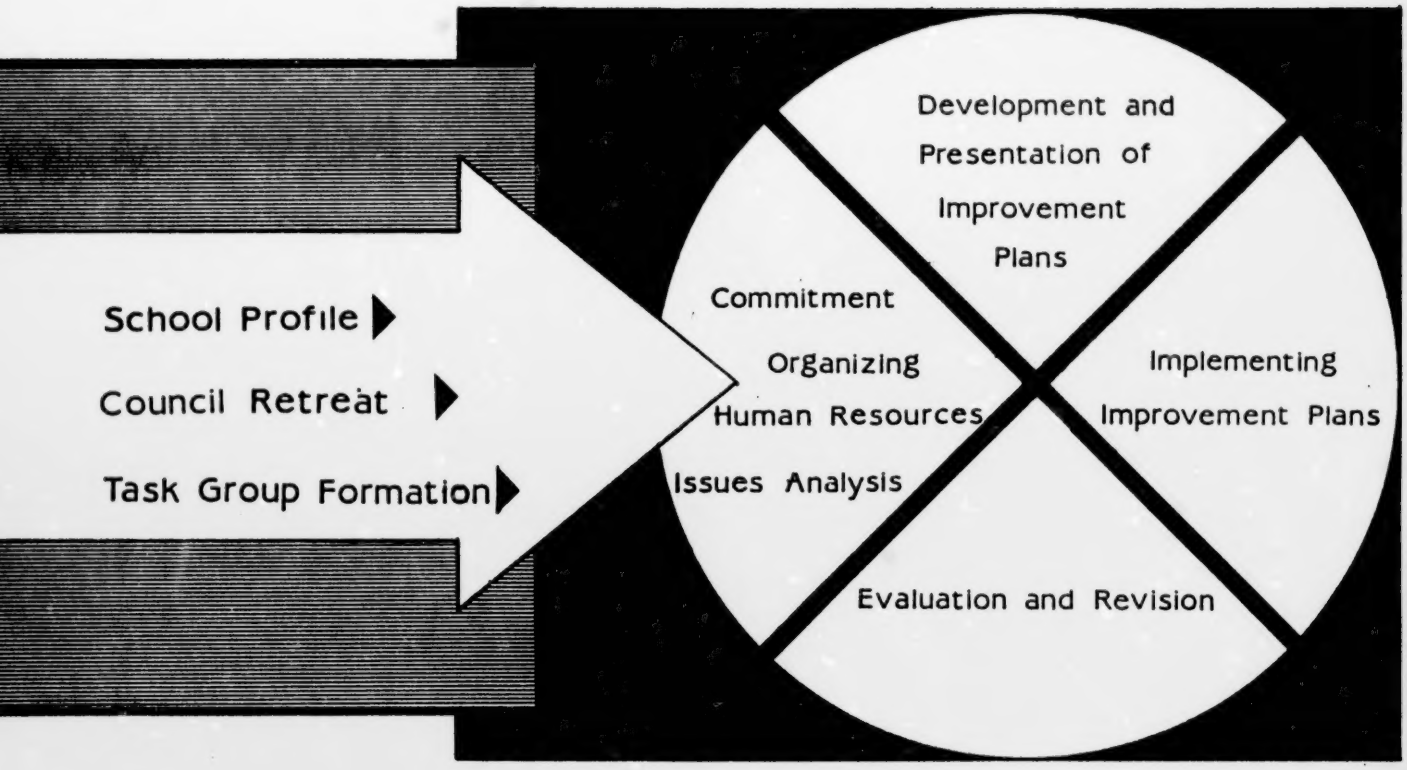
  The Coordinating Council, a representative group of the school staff, is created to lead the school development process.

- **School Profile**

  Information is collected from staff and students in critical dimensions of school life, mission, curriculum, and climate.

- **Council Retreat**

  The council, based on the school profile, identifies, analyzes, and prioritizes issues and problems, determines preliminary time lines, and organizes for task group formation.



- Task Group Formation

  Staff volunteers agree to serve on short-term problem-solving and planning task groups which address specific problems as defined by the Coordinating Council, thus building participation and commitment.

- Development and Presentation of Improvement Plans

  Based upon recommendations from task groups, the Coordinating Council organizes plans for institutional development and presents plans to appropriate decision makers.

- Implementing Improvement Plans

  The Coordinating Council, working with departments and task groups, guides the implementation of the improvement plans.

- Evaluation and Revision

  The council regularly evaluates the program, makes appropriate revisions, reports to the school community, and sets new goals.

Thus, ongoing development process continues, where issues are analyzed, commitment is generated, and human resources are organized to bring about school improvement.

JOINING FORCES
Cooperative Agreements

The success of any innovation ultimately depends on those who are implementing it. However, it is vital, if **JOINING FORCES** is to succeed that the entire school community be committed to the program goals and demonstrate that commitment in some tangible way. This community includes teaching and non-teaching staff, building administrators, the district superintendent and central office staff, local and state education associations, and the local school board. Each of these constituent groups, in its own way, needs to support **JOINING FORCES** if it is to succeed. To show their support and willingness to work within the guidelines of this program, constituent groups are asked to sign a cooperative agreement expressing their willingness to become a part of the development program and agreeing to accept the tasks which they may be required to perform.

JOINING FORCES

_____
(participating school)

_____ agrees to undertake these responsibilities
(participating school)

associated with the **JOINING FORCES** Program.

- participate actively and provide time for the orientation and problem-solving activities including:
  - establishing a committee of school staff to oversee program activities...the Coordinating Council;
  - making presentations to selected staff members, PTA, and other school-related organizations;
  - securing a commitment from the staff to take part in the program;
- participate actively and provide time for creating and studying a comprehensive school profile by:
  - completing the school profile;
  - completing a school climate questionnaire;
- participate actively and provide time for miscellaneous activities such as:
  - reading summary papers and other recommended materials;
  - sharing ideas, concerns, and suggestions;
  - providing input during task group and/or Coordinating Council meetings;
  - developing and disseminating news releases, informational updates, and annual progress reports;
  - attending seminars and other follow-up training activities; and
  - supporting programs, plans, and activities generated from the program.

_____
(local school district)

_____ agrees to undertake these responsibilities
(district superintendent)

associated with the **JOINING FORCES** Program.

- provide data when requested on absenteeism, violence, vandalism, turnover, and so forth that are needed for assessment purposes;
- support and participate in selected program activities;
- identify funds to support program activities;
- seek to ensure stability of leadership and staff in the participating building;
- avoid generating competing priorities, and use the program structure to cope with emergent problems;
- direct inservice activities to support the program priorities; and
- seriously consider all recommendations made. If recommendations are unacceptable, detail reasons why.

JOINING FORCES

_____
(state education association)

_____ agrees to undertake these responsi-
(state education association)

bilities associated with the **JOINING FORCES** Program:

- select program staff members and provide them with appropriate training and materials;
- work collaboratively with organizations like Research for Better Schools, Inc. (RBS) to provide schools with technical assistance in the areas of materials development, research, documentation, assessment, and training;
- assist with the design and development of related training events; and
- train selected staff of the participating school to undertake trainer functions in the future.

JOINING FORCES

_____
(local board of education)

_____ agrees to undertake these responsibilities
(board of education)

associated with the **JOINING FORCES** Program:

- provide requested materials on absenteeism, violence, vandalism, and so forth that are needed for assessment and documentation purposes;
- agree to leave the selection of coordinating committee members within the domain of the school and education association;
- support improvement activities;
- provide funds -- specified in the budget -- for implementing the improvement activities;
- seek to ensure staff stability in participating schools; and
- avoid generating competing priorities, and use the program structure to cope with emergent problems.

JOINING FORCES

_____
(state education association)

_____ agrees to undertake these responsi-
(state education association)

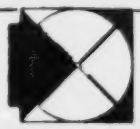
bilities associated with the **JOINING FORCES** Program:

- select program staff members and provide them with appropriate training and materials;
- work collaboratively with organizations like Research for Better Schools, Inc. (RBS) to provide schools with technical assistance in the areas of materials development, research, documentation, assessment, and training;
- assist with the design and development of related training events; and
- train selected staff of the participating school to undertake trainer functions in the future.

JOINING FORCES

The participating parties recognize the importance of the **JOINING FORCES** Program and accept the provisions of this agreement as commitments which they will cooperatively and in good faith honor, support, and seek to fulfill.

(participating school)	(principal)
	(faculty representative)
(local education association)	(president)
(state education association)	(president)
(local board of education)	(president)
(local school district)	(superintendent)



JOINING FORCES

The objectives of the orientation for the school staff are four-fold. Those objectives are:

- introduce school staff to concepts, content, and processes of Joining Forces, including the role of staff participation in the change process;
- make staff aware of the support by the school board, administration, and teachers associations;
- begin to identify staff who are willing and interesting in participating; and
- begin to identify school problems and opportunities for improvement.

The orientation takes place on several fronts because district personnel, as well as building staff, need to be inducted into the process. The orientation process may vary somewhat from school to school but primarily it can be divided into two basic steps.

Step one of the orientation involves outlining the goals of Joining Forces and the expected outcomes. The processes and activities are outlined, teacher responsibilities in the program are reviewed, and the commitments of all constituent groups are made clear. This presentation can be made to the school staff in a large-group setting. The presentation can be made by a teacher leader, association representative, the principal, or some combination of people. It is important that the person who will lead the training and data feedback phases be introduced at this time. Any consultants who will be involved also should be present during the orientation.

The second step of the orientation includes reviewing the basic concepts of the program and also starting up the diagnostic process by asking building level staff to begin to identify areas of concern and

opportunities for improvement. This step of the orientation involves all staff in the first step of problem solving and issue identification. It is sometimes useful at this stage to share with participants some of the research literature which forms the basis for aspects of the program as well as to review some of the current reform proposals. This step is best carried out in small groups across disciplines. Outside consultants, as well as in-house group leaders, can serve as facilitators.

By the completion of this two-step orientation process, school staff should be informed about the program, understand and agree to the goals, know their responsibilities, and have participated in initial issue identification. In this way, Joining Forces begins the participatory, collaborative effort toward school improvement.

The Orientation Planning Guide and sample agenda can help you plan your school's orientation program.➨

Orientation Planning Guide

When planning your **JOINING FORCES** orientation, consider the following issues.

1. Tentative date _____

2. Time

3. Does this date/time necessitate any schedule changes?

4. If yes, what do you need to do about this?

5. Availability of consultants/facilitators

6. Goals of the orientation (check those that are appropriate for your orientation)

   _____ outline program
   _____ identify individual responsibilities
   _____ discuss the School Assessment Survey (SAS)
   _____ identify staff interested in participating on the council, on a task group, and in general
   _____ identify general schoolwide issues of concern

7. What do you want to accomplish during your school's orientation? State your goals. _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. What do you need to accomplish your goals? _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

9. Who do you need to help you accomplish your goals? _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

10. Suggested Materials

    a. Program Description

    b. Shared Decision-Making handout

    c. Coordinating Council handout

Sample Orientation Agenda

Step I. General Session

A. Key concepts of program -- responsibilities and outcomes.

B. Program Structure

Step II: Small-Group Session

A. Review concepts

B. What three-four major issues need addressing at our school?

Step III: General Session

A. Reports from small groups: What are our major issues?

B. What happens next?

JOINING FORCES
Program Description

JOINING FORCES is an organizational improvement program for secondary schools. The improvement process involves a series of activities that are described in the materials that follow. The program assumes there is a desire on the part of school and school district staff to involve themselves in a long-term, planned change effort to improve the quality of school life for staff and students. The program begins with the development of a school profile and a diagnosis of conditions within the school. The data are analyzed and fed back to the school staff to stimulate a collective diagnosis of issues and problems in the school. This is the first step in a repetitive cycle of priority setting, problem solving, and planning.

Central to the program is the formation of the Coordinating Council, a representative body of the staff that works with the principal to lead the improvement/development activities. The council collects the data relative to the conditions within the school, analyzes the results, defines priority areas, and, very importantly, recruits task groups made up of staff volunteers who study the problems and make recommendations for action. The Coordinating Council then makes its own recommendations to the school administration. The administration accepts the obligation of considering the recommendations and responding in a timely manner. If the administration decides to modify or reject specific recommendations, it accepts the further obligation of meeting with the council to explain and discuss its position. Once plans are approved, the council works with the administration to develop staff, student, and community support; initiate the needed activities; monitor implementation; and evaluate the results.

A school involved with the development program may benefit from the use of outside consultants who can assist with data collection and analysis and provide training to the council in group management, problem solving, and planning. However, it is the council and the school administration who direct the improvement process. Consultants serve in facilitative or support capacities.

A major ingredient for successful implementation of improvement plans is the involvement of the total school "community" in the improvement of the school's effectiveness. **JOINING FORCES** is based on the premise that schools can become more effective by making better use of their human resources, by opening up the decision-making/influence process, and by focusing their improvement efforts on a few critical areas at a time. This process of participation and the collaborative problem solving improves the quality of worklife in the school, revitalizes staff creativity and commitment, and unleashes new energies to solve everyday problems.

The chances for positive changes increase when the entire staff works together toward common goals. School facilities that embark upon such a development process can anticipate higher staff morale, improved relationships between teaching staff and the administration, more effective communication, an improved learning environment, and increased academic achievement.

The development process envisioned here is not a quick fix. Rather it is a deliberate, ongoing, structured approach to planned change. The program follows a set of activities that serve as a framework for organizing school development activities. As successes occur, commitment to the program will increase and so will participation. Success should

build upon success and, hopefully, the end result will be a more effec ve school in which improvement is an ongoing goal and where the decision making and planning processes permit continued adaptation to an ever-changing environment.

On the following pages the development process is set forth. It may sound simple, but as in most worthwhile enterprises, there is some work involved. The program focuses your efforts and creates a structure that ensures there are some results, but the character of these results depends upon your energy and work.

We hope you decide to support this process. But remember that this is a joint effort. Cooperation among all elements of the school community provides the foundation upon which a more effective school can be developed. Your help and commitment are necessary to make it work. We believe that reform of secondary schools must be led by secondary school educators, and that this program can provide the opportunity for that leadership to emerge and succeed.➨

JOINING FORCES
A TEAM APPROACH TO SECONDARY SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Successful schools, like many productive organizations have clear goals, high expectations and standards, an emphasis on program evaluation, orderly climates, and effective leadership. In other words, the critical conditions that motivate and satisfy employees and students are met in effective schools. **JOINING FORCES** is an organizational improvement program designed to address these issues by creating a program in which labor and management cooperate to improve the quality of work life and the effectiveness and productivity of schools.

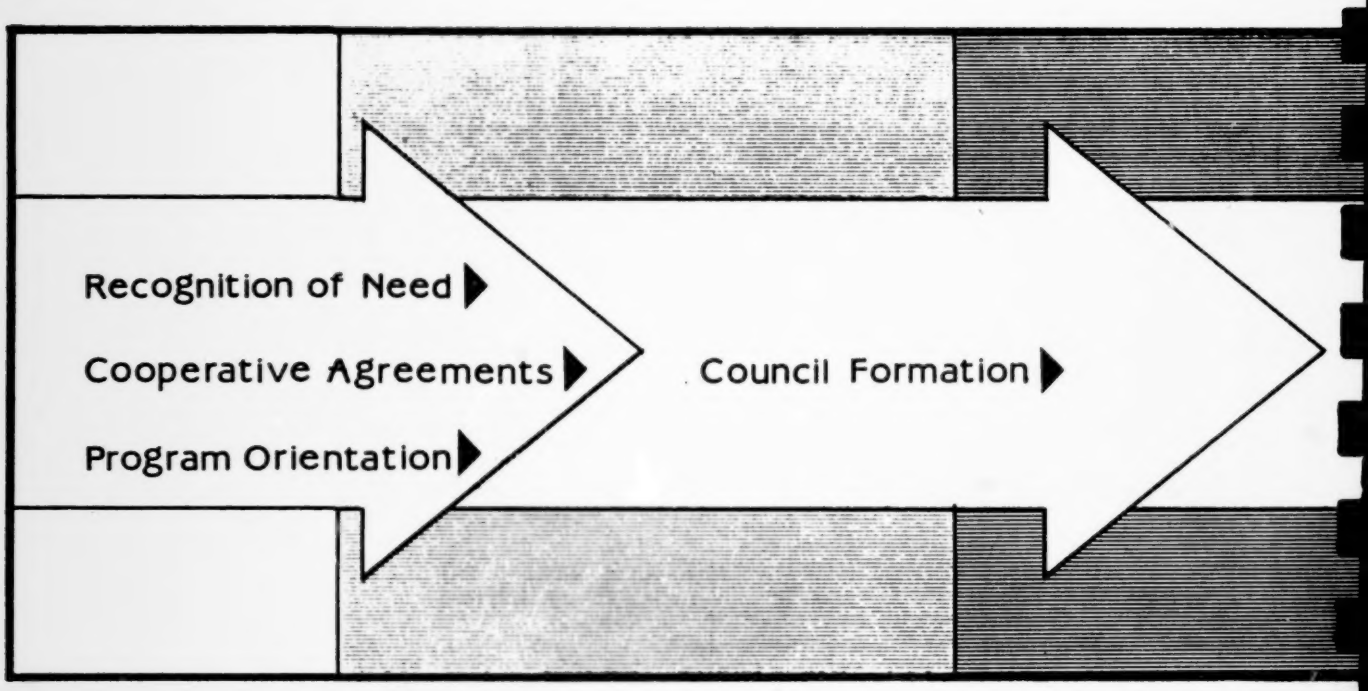
➨ WHAT IS THE PROGRAM'S GOAL?

The program's goal is to create a more effective school by:

- increasing staff consensus about the school mission, enhancing the commitment to that mission, and creating a tighter alignment between the mission and the curriculum and other services provided by the school;
- developing and implementing a structure for participatory decision making and planning and increasing the school's capability to define and solve problems; and
- improving internal communications, cooperation, and coordination, thereby creating an organizational climate that fosters a sense of community, pride, and achievement.

➨ WHAT IS THE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?

This school development process involves the staff in a long-term, planned change effort that is organized around several levels of activity. These activities are provided in materials that follow.



- Recognition of Need

  The school recognizes its need for improvement and makes the decision to consider participating in the Joining Forces Program.

- Cooperative Agreements

  Representatives of the local school district, the local education association, the local board of education, and the state education association agree to fulfill the obligations of the Joining Forces Program.

- Orientation

  A Joining Forces presentation, including the program overview, goals, roles of participants, and anticipated outcomes, is conducted for school staff members.

- Coordinating Council Formation

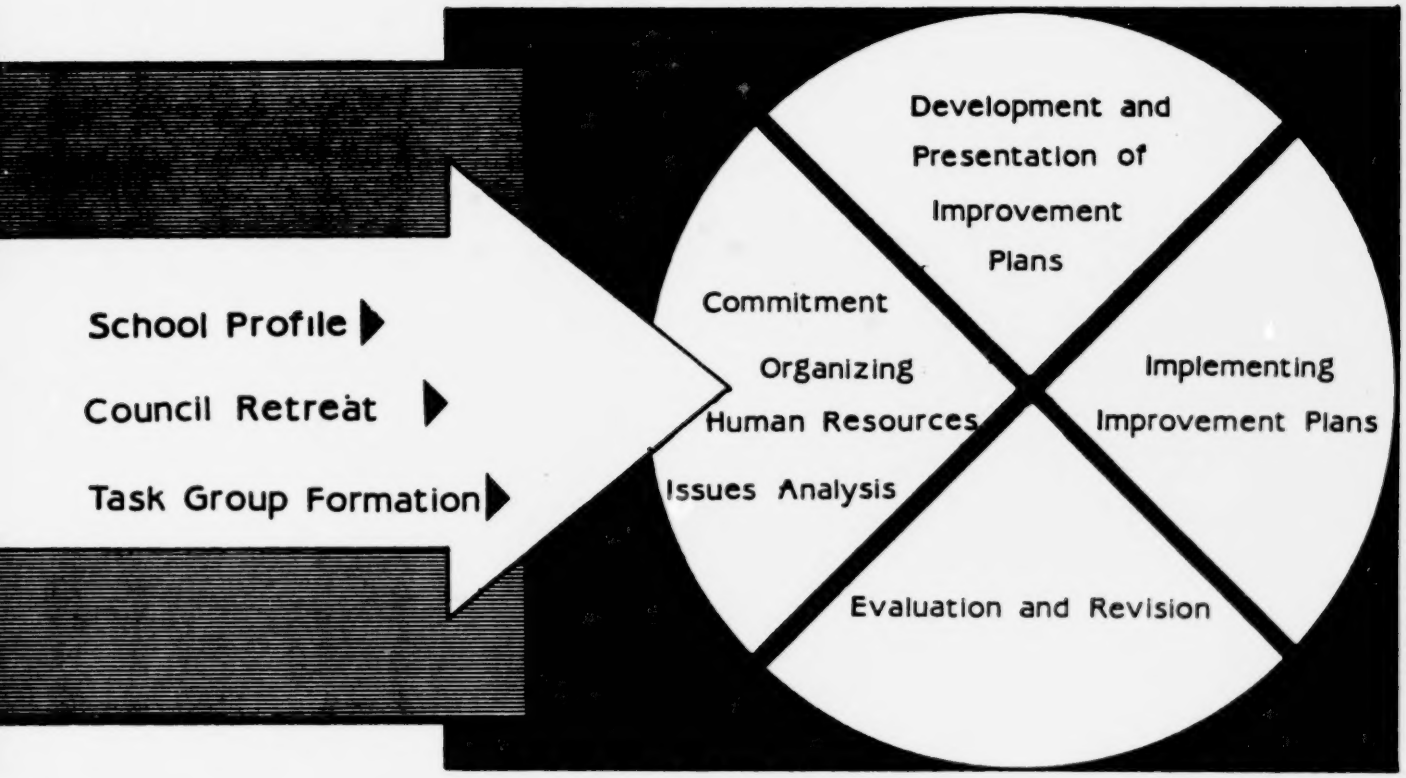
  The Coordinating Council, a representative group of the school staff, is created to lead the school development process.

- School Profile

  Information is collected from staff and students in critical dimensions of school life, mission, curriculum, and climate.

- Council Retreat

  The council, based on the school profile, identifies, analyzes, and prioritizes issues and problems, determines preliminary time lines, and organizes for task group formation.



- Task Group Formation

  Staff volunteers agree to serve on short-term problem-solving and planning task groups which address specific problems as defined by the Coordinating Council, thus building participation and commitment.

- Development and Presentation of Improvement Plans

  Based upon recommendations from task groups, the Coordinating Council organizes plans for institutional development and presents plans to appropriate decision makers.

- Implementing Improvement Plans

  The Coordinating Council, working with departments and task groups, guides the implementation of the improvement plans.

- Evaluation and Revision

  The council regularly evaluates the program, makes appropriate revisions, reports to the school community, and sets new goals.

Thus, ongoing development process continues, where issues are analyzed, commitment is generated, and human resources are organized to bring about school improvement.

➨ WHAT WILL YOU GET OUT OF IT?

Individuals participating in the program can reap many benefits, including:

- the satisfaction of having helped make your school a better place to work and a more effective institution for its students;
- a sense of community and cooperation that comes from sharing ideas and working together to solve problems;
- an opportunity to influence school policies, procedures, and programs through your own contributions and through the Coordinating Council;
- enhanced skills at small-group work, problem solving, analysis of data, and communications. The skills developed will depend on what group you are in and how active you are;
- new understanding of how organizations work and the factors that make them effective or ineffective;
- increased understanding of the perspectives and opinions of your fellow staff members; and
- the knowledge that you helped demonstrate that teachers, administrators, and researchers can work together for the good of the children in our public schools.

JOINING FORCES

➨ WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

A major ingredient for success in this program is the involvement of the total school community -- the superintendent, building administrators, teachers, and students -- to improve the school's effectiveness. Joining Forces is based on the premise that a school can become more effective by making better use of its own human resources and by strengthening participation and collaborative problem solving and decision making.

➨ WHAT WILL YOU HAVE TO DO?

Your commitment and help is needed to make this program work. If you decide to participate, these are the kinds of things you will have to do:

- serve on the Coordinating Council if you are elected;
- fill out a questionnaire on organizational climate and perhaps participate in an interview on the academic program and instructional effectiveness;
- volunteer for problem-solving groups in which you work with a small group of your peers to define critical issues and problems. As a member of such a group, your work will involve defining problems, reviewing data, discussing options, and developing recommendations for your presentation to the Coordinating Council;
- periodically serve on a committee to help the Coordinating Council or relevant department implement the school improvement plan; and
- support the council's work and contribute to a climate of positive attitudes and high expectations of success.

Shared Decision Making

What Is It?

Shared decision making is the voluntary sharing of power by those in authority with those in subordinate positions. It is more democratic than the hierarchial, top-down forms of decision making typical of school bureaucracies. However, it may take a variety of forms and the form may vary with the content of the decision. Involvement can be examined in terms of who is involved, how frequently, in what types of decisions, and at what level.

Why Do It?

The benefits of shared decision making have been demonstrated by research. They include:

- It is consistent with principles of democracy and therefore, is an appropriate model for a public institution.
- It results in greater consensus about goals.
- It produces better decisions.
- It produces higher commitment to implement decisions.
- It raises staff satisfaction.
- It raises staff productivity (effort and cooperation).

Who Should Participate?

- team management
- selected teachers or staff
- all teachers
- all staff
- parents
- students

How Much Participation?

The level of participation will vary with the situation. Time availability, levels of expertise, and other factors will influence whether decisions can be shared. The following list describes the range:

- no involvement
- provide information to decision maker
- help in formulating alternatives
- suggest specific alternatives
- review and comment on proposed decision (veto power)
- jointly make the decision
- make the decision

What Kinds of Decisions Are Shared?

Staff may participate in a variety of decision areas. Listed in order of the greatest frequency, these are:

- curriculum and instruction
- student assignment and discipline
- faculty management
- resource allocation
- community relations
- staff personnel

What Are the Risks?

- Shared decision making takes longer.
- Shared decision making can surface conflicts.
- Shared decision making can create unfulfilled expectations and increased frustration.
- Shared decision making usually does not result in shared responsibility so the administrator is taking a risk.

Other Issues

- Is the process formal or informal?
- Who sets the agenda?
- How much participation do individuals want?
- How much time can be devoted to shared decision making?
- What kinds of conflict resolution procedures are appropriate?
- How do participants perceive the involvement?

Coordinating Council

The Coordinating Council provides leadership and direction of the development process. The council is a formal structure consisting of the principal and a cross section of school staff. A chairperson and secretary are selected and meetings are held on a regularly scheduled basis. Council members:

- collect data about conditions of the school;
- interpret and analyze data;
- set school improvement priorities;
- set up task groups to address schoolwide issues;
- develop a schoolwide improvement plan;
- review task group reports;
- make program and/or policy recommendations to the principal;
- monitor the implementation of planned activities;
- make reports to staff, the education association, central office, and the school board; and
- evaluate achievements.

Responsibilities

Council members are asked to fulfill the following responsibilities:

- attend council meetings,
- act as a link between the council and task groups,
- write progress reports of achievement in task group areas,
- collect information pertinent to the school improvement plan,
- assume various roles on the council to assure that proposed objectives are achieved,
- contribute to the group and help members function as a team,
- make decisions relative to the school improvement plan,

- share final recommendations with the principal and/or the policy-making body of the school and/or school district,
- make reports to the staff and the school board,
- monitor the implementation of planned activities, and
- evaluate all phases of the institutional development activities.

JOINING FORCES

Coordinating Council Formation

The Coordinating Council is a representative group of the school staff who, with the building principal, lead the development activities. The council is a formal structure consisting of the principal and a cross section of the school staff. Each academic department should be represented. Schools can decide individually about the inclusion of non-academic staff, students, and so forth. The council may be built around an existing advisory group or created from scratch. Members may be elected or appointed. They may represent departments, grade levels, or teams. What is important is that the council be made up in such a way that no one feels left out and that it reflects the organizational culture of the school. Every work group in the school must feel that it has access to council representation.

The council sets goals and objectives for the program and establishes operational guidelines. A council may even develop a charter or a constitution that guides its operation. A chairperson and secretary are selected, meetings are held on a regularly scheduled basis, and minutes are recorded.

The council acts as a policy-making group and its success depends upon the extent of commitment of its members. Therefore, membership should not be treated lightly nor should people be arbitrarily placed on the council. Staff members should be asked to participate on the council not only for their willingness and commitment but for the skills and expertise they might contribute. The fate of the program rests upon how well the Coordinating Council functions. Therefore, council members, in order to discharge their duties, receive training in techniques of problem solving, decision making, data gathering, proposal presentation, and team building.

Council members also serve as a vital link and guide to the task groups (see section on Task Group Formation). The training that council members receive can also help the task groups do their jobs. So council members may act as trainers as they pass along techniques in problem solving and teamwork.

The council is an ongoing part of the life of the school and it must decide how it is going to maintain itself. Some of the ways councils can address this is by meeting on a regularly, publicly scheduled basis. Minutes and records of its activities should be maintained. Officers need to be selected. And ways of communicating council activities to the school at-large must be implemented.

Council members:

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- interpret and analyze data;
- set school improvement priorities;
- set up task groups to address schoolwide issues;
- develop a schoolwide improvement plan;
- review task group reports;
- make program and/or policy recommendations to the principal;
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Responsibilities of Coordinating Council Members

Council members are asked to fulfill the following responsibilities:

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- assume various roles on the council to assure that proposed objectives are achieved,
- contribute to the group and help members function as a team,
- make decisions relative to the school improvement plan,
- share final recommendations with the principal and/or the policy-making body of the school and/or school district,
- make reports to the staff and school board,
- monitor the implementation of planned activities, and
- evaluate all phases of the institutional development activities.

The council, as a group, provides a crucial leadership function to the improvement process. The council must develop vision and articulate that vision clearly and concisely. Goals and objectives must be developed that are understood and shared. And the council must set a tone and an atmosphere of willingness, participation, and collaboration.➧

A Memo to Council Members

Re: Gaining Support of School Staff*

The essence of Joining Forces is the involvement of school staff members in the improvement effort at its school. Each individual in the school community should feel that he/she has an important role to play in changing that building or in deciding how problems that prevent effective education there can be resolved. As members of the Coordinating Council at your school, you must be concerned with gaining, encouraging, and sustaining support of all school personnel in the schoolwide improvement activities. Here are some key suggestions to assist you:

Recognize Commitment

- Be alert to recognize individuals who care about the different topics and voluntarily seek to work on the task group.
- Note the persons who are willing to take responsibility for carrying through improvement tasks and who also try to involve others in the work.
- Pay attention to who prepares task group reports and note which staff members collect data or locate helpful resources for activity implementation.

Encourage Involvement

- Invite new staff members to participate in improvement activities.
- Identify personnel at faculty meetings or in staff development programs who are interested in the school's improvement and who should be encouraged to work on development activities.
- Plan meetings or implementation activities at times and places most convenient to the school staff and with the least amount of disturbance to regular responsibilities.

*Adapted from NJEA-SET, 1981.

- Provide materials and information about improvement activities in an efficient manner but with high priority for conveying a sense of special shared purpose among the school staff.

- Identify those who are not participating and at appropriate intervals renew the offer to get involved. Try to build in roles they might find interesting. Identify their special skills and use them.

Keep Staff Supportive

- Respond quickly and effectively to problems that might arise in implementation.

- Recognize natural leadership in improvement activities and seek to recognize responsibilities when tasks are not being completed effectively.

- Share successes with staff inside the building and advertise program effectiveness to the larger community of the school. Be sure to identify the workers and doers behind each success.

Coordinating Council Charter

of

_____

(name of school)

Purpose

The purpose of the Coordinating Council is to organize the identification of intra-school problems; provide the means to investigate each problem; determine various alternative solutions for elimination of the problem; and make recommendations to the proper individuals, administrators, or groups affected by the problem and/or its resolution.

Membership

General Membership. The council shall consist of between 15 and 17 full-time members. The membership should be drawn from tenured staff within each department and from referent groups within the school. The council should try to include at least one representative from each of the following: administration, building representatives, supervisors, counselors, physical education, social studies, foreign language, math, English, science, guidance, business, arts, special needs, hall aides, and the student council (two students/one vote). At the first meeting of each school year the council should determine vacancies of members and officers and openly solicit the general staff to fill these vacancies prior to the next scheduled meeting.

Elected Officials: Each elected official of the Coordinating Council shall hold office for a term of one year. The number of consecutive terms any member may serve shall not be restricted. The official positions are as follows:

Chairperson -- Will chair all general and executive meetings and shall give a short report to the general faculty during at least two general faculty meetings each year. The chairperson's voting privilege will be restricted to breaking a tie vote, Charter changes and elections.

Vice Chairperson -- Will act in the absence of the Chairperson and will coordinate the efforts of all standing and temporary committees.

Recording Secretary -- Will keep minutes at all general and executive meetings and will distribute a copy of the previous meeting's minutes prior to each general council meeting.

Corresponding Secretary -- Will publish the council newsletter each November, February, and May, will respond to all signed suggestions from the suggestion box after general council discussion, and will coordinate the council elections each spring.

Members-at-large (2) -- Will sit on the Executive Board.

Executive Board: The Executive Board will exist for making emergency decisions when it would be unnecessary or impossible to call a special full meeting or when because of urgency, the decision must be immediate. The Executive Board shall consist of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Recording Secretary, and two Members-at-large.

Committees: All committees shall be created and disbanded as needed to accomplish council tasks.

Meetings

Months of operation: The council shall meet the first Wednesday in September after the first payday and will convene every other Wednesday until the last Wednesday before the last payday in June.

Meeting Time: Each regularly schedule Coordinating Council meeting shall be between 2:00 pm and 4:00 pm.

Agenda: Each meeting shall follow the schedule as set forth below:

Opening of meeting
Reading and acceptance of minutes
Old business from previous minutes
Special event (e.g. visitor, special report, etc.)
Report of committees (five minute limit)
Report of principal (five minute limit)
New business
Good of the order
Adjournment

Publications: Three times each year, November, February and May, the council shall distribute a new issue of the Coordinating Council Newsletter to all school staff members. The council shall document and disseminate information to the general staff regarding meetings, issues, and progress of identified problems. Minutes for all regular and Executive Board meetings shall be reproduced and distributed to members and a copy will be placed on file in the library.

Elections: Elections shall be conducted once each year in June to determine official positions for the following school year. The nominations and elections shall be conducted by the Corresponding Secretary. Nominations will be accepted and recorded at the second regularly scheduled meeting in May and the official elections will be held during the following meeting. Elections will be by closed ballot. The Corresponding Secretary shall notify the full staff by posting the results within two school days after the actual election.

Changes to Charter: Any changes to this Charter must be presented, discussed, and tabled until the following meeting at which time there will be additional discussion and voting. Any Charter change must pass by a two-thirds majority vote.

Creating the School Profile

To capture the full picture of the school as an organization, it is essential to collect information from as diverse a group of participants as possible. This is done by creating a school profile. Data can be collected from constituents ranging from students, custodians, office support staff, aides, teachers, supervisors, counselors, and administrators. Multiple methods -- from informal interviews to sophisticated surveys -- are used in collecting this information. The important point is that everyone has the opportunity to have some input which will be seriously considered and used. In addition, it is important to make use of available printed documents (e.g., staff meeting minutes, student and teacher handbooks, school board policy statements, etc.) to help create a better understanding of the context in which the school is operating. This activity can be organized and implemented by the Coordinating Council.

The School Profile form included here is an adaptation from one which is currently used by the United States Department of Education's Secondary School Recognition Program. This form cannot be completed by any one individual so the council must determine the most efficient and comprehensive way to obtain the information.

Another critical source of information is the classroom teacher. A great deal of effort goes into the collection and assessment of teacher views because it is felt that teachers are key participants in the organization. They control the performance of students through the teaching process. Since how well they teach is related to the organizational environment in which they work, it is essential to have a clear picture of their perceptions of the climate of the organization. To

assess that climate the School Assessment Survey (SAS) has been designed. Survey questions ask teachers to be informants about their school as an organization and their responses are aggregated to create a schoolwide picture.➡

JOINING FORCES SAMPLE

SCHOOL PROFILE

School Name: _____
Address: _____ Telephone No.: ( ) _____
_____

Section I: School Characteristics

1. What grades are included in your school and how many students are enrolled at each level? ____ 9th ____ 10th ____ 11th ____ 12th ____ Total

2. How many students are enrolled in your school district? _____ In general, how would you classify the district? _____ Rural _____ Suburban _____ Urban

3. What is the ethnic composition of the student body in your school?
____% White ____% Black ____% Hispanic ____% American Indian ____% Asian

   Does your school have any sizable group of recent immigrants of refugees?

   _____

4. What percentage of the students come from low income families? _____%
   Please indicate how you determined the number of students from low income families.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

5. Please indicate the number of staff in each of the following positions:

	Full-time	Part-time
Administrators	_____	_____
Teachers	_____	_____
Teacher aides	_____	_____
Counselors	_____	_____
Library and other media professionals	_____	_____
Social workers	_____	_____
Security officers	_____	_____
Food Service Personnel	_____	_____
Clerical	_____	_____

JOINING FORCES SAMPLE

Section II: Attributes of Excellence

Programs, Policies, and Practices

The items in this section are intended to gather information about the ways the attributes of excellence are reflected in the operation of your school. The last item in this section invites you to describe other features of your school you feel are important to its success.

1. Clear Academic Goals

   a. What are the overall instructional goals for the school? How were they identified? Are they adequate?

   b. Are the goals used to shape curriculum and program? Are staff and students aware of them?

   c. Is progress toward the goals assessed? How? By when? How often?

2. High Expectations

   a. In the chart that follows, please indicate your school's minimum graduation requirements.

	1 year	2 year	3 year	4 year
English				
Math				
Social Studies				
Foreign Language				
Physical Education				
Health				
Other _____				

SAMPLE

b. What other graduation requirements must be met? (tests, attendance, senior essays, community service, etc.)

c. In the chart that follows, please indicate the number of students enrolled in advanced placement or honors classes in English, Math, Social Studies, Science, and Foreign Language. Also, please indicate the proportion of students who exceed the minimum course requirements in each subject.

	No. in advanced study	No. Exceeding Minimum Requirements
English	_____	_____
Math	_____	_____
Social Studies	_____	_____
Science	_____	_____
Foreign Language	_____	_____

d. In general, are students encouraged to complete course work that exceeds minimum requirements?

e. How are students selected for honors on AP courses?

f. Does the school have a homework policy? Is it effective?

SAMPLE

g. What is the average amount of homework for a freshman? a junior? How frequently are students asked to prepare written assignments longer than two typed pages?

h. What problems are created by current policies and practices on graduation, advanced coursework, or homework?

3. Order and Discipline

a. During the past school year, how many of each of the following occurred in your school?

Student suspensions _____
Assaults on students _____
Assaults on teachers _____
Reported incidents of vandalism _____

Have these rates been consistent over the past three years? If not, what changes have occurred? Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____

b. Does your school have a formal discipline policy and/or any special procedures or programs to maintain discipline? If so, please describe them and indicate the number of students served by them.

_____
_____
_____
_____

c. Are students orderly in classrooms? in the halls and public spaces? in the cafeteria? in the school grounds and surrounding neighborhood? Describe the type, frequency, and location of undersired behavior, if any.

_____
_____
_____
_____

INING FORCES SAMPLE

d. On the average, what percentage of the students attend school each day? ____% Teachers? ____% Have either of these rates changed significantly during the last three years? If so, please explain why?

e. Is the school safe for students and staff before, during, and after school hours? If not, what specific times and places are unsafe and for whom?

f. What problems are created by current policies and practices on discipline and attendance?

. Teacher Efficacy

a. What opportunities exist for teacher input into decisions about a)budget, b) scheduling, c) curriculum, d) materials, e) discipline policy, f) teacher evaluation, g) other policies?

b. Describe the general character of student-teacher relationships in the school? Consider the both classroom and other interactions.

c. Do teachers have time to meet with students individually outside of class? Where do such meetings occur? When? How frequently?

d. Are teachers respected by the administration, district staff, parents?

JOINING FORCES SAMPLE

e. Are class sizes suitable to program objectives? Note exceptions.

f. Are classrooms and other facilities adequate for program objectives? Note exceptions.

g. Are there problems in the school that obstruct the effectiveness of the teaching staff or lower its morale?

5. Rewards and Incentives for Teachers and Students

a. Are there formal procedures for recognizing excellent teachers? Are there special rewards and incentives available for them?

b. Is there support for curricular or instructional innovation?

c. Does the school have a on-going staff development program? How is it planned? By whom? How is it linked to school or district priorities? How do teachers feel about the program?

d. Does your school have formal procedures for evaluating teachers? Are they useful? Do they improve instruction?

JOINING FORCES SAMPLE

e. Aside from grades does your school have procedures for recognizing outstanding student accomplishments in coursework on other school activities? Are these rewards valued by students? Which students?

f. Aside from grades, does your school have procedures for recognizing improvement by students in coursework? Are there rewards, valued by students? Which students?

. Positive Environment

a. Is the physical plant clean and well-maintained? Are the caferterias, teachers lounges, and restrooms clean and well-maintained? What is the overall effect of the physical plant on attitudes and behavior of staff and students?

b. How would you describe the social climate of the school? What has been done to create this climate?

c. Describe relationships among the teaching staff? Is there collegiality, trust, and cooperation? Do some teachers feel isolated? Why? Are these opportunities for social interaction?

. Administrative Leadership

a. Aside from regular staff meetings and routine memoranda, and there opportunities for communication between the principal and the staff? Describe them.

b. What is the administration's vision for the school and how is it communicated to staff and students?

JOINING FORCES SAMPLE

c. Are building administration involved in recruitment of staff? How? What influence do they have over personnel decision?

d. How much discretion do building administrators have over budgets, schedules, curriculum and program, and personnel assignments?

e. Do all the staff in the building report to the principal?

f. Do staff cooperate with the administration and make good faith efforts to implement school policy?

8. Monitoring for Results

a. Other than report cards, does your school have regular procedures for notifying students and parents of student progress in coursework? Are they used? Are they effective?

b. Are there policies on standards to guide classroom assessment practices and teacher testing?

c. Do departments develop tests jointly, administer common tests, or review teacher tests? Is this encouraged?

d. Are there clear standards for promotion from grade to grade? Are they enforced?

JOINING FORCES SAMPLE

e. Does your school have regular procedures for monitoring achievement of objectives and success of instructional programs? Describe them. Who participates? How frequently does this occur? Is the data used by teaching staff? Give some examples of how evaluators have improved programs.

f. Are the results of these evaluations shared with the public? How?

. Curriculum

a. What procedures are there to ensure proper sequencing of courses and reduction of content overlap?

b. Does your school have regular procedures for internal review content and sequence across grade level? If so, please describe them and indicate when the most recent reviews were completed.

c. Does your school have curriculum grades in all subject areas? Are they used? If not, why not? Are there other controls over the content of courses? Describe them.

d. Are there regular opportunities for planning and coordination of instruction within content areas? across content areas? between the high school and its feeder schools? Give examples.

e. Does your school have programs that concentrate in developing study skills? How many students are served? Do all who need the help receive it?

SAMPLE

f. Does your school provide remediation in basic skills or other content areas? How is it delivered? How is this coordinated with regular classes? How effective is the remediation in each area?

g. What are the schools major curricular strengths and weaknesses? What is the evidence for these judgments?

h. Are students tracked by ability? How are these decisions made? Are they tracked separately for each subhject or for all? Are higher tracks, e.g., honors classes, open to those who want to try them?

10. Opportunities for Student Participation and Responsibility

a. Describe the scope of the school's extracurricular prog-am. Approximately how many students participate? What obstacles exist to greater participation?

b. How strong are the activities that are closely linked to academics, e.g., math league, science clubs, school newspaper, etc.?

c. Are adequate time and resources provided to support extracurricular activities? What is needed?

d. What opportunities exist for student participation in school governance and policy-making?

e. What opportunities exist for student service to the community?

JOINING FORCES SAMPLE

f. Do some students feel excluded or powerless? Why?

1. Introudction of Improvements

a. Describe briefly the major improvement efforts undertaken int he past three years. How successful were they? How did the faculty react?

b. Did teaching staff participate in planning these improvements?

c. Were faculty properly oriented and prepared to implement the desired changes?

d. Were the changes evaluated? by whom? with what consequence?

e. What problems is the school currently addressing? What improvement efforts are in progress?

2. District and Community Support

a. Does the district provide adequate resources to the school? Are there neglected areas?

b. Does the district consult with school staff before making policy changes affecting the school?

NING FORCES SAMPLE

c. Does the district leadership give recognition to teaching staff for outstanding performance or extra effort?

d. Describe the nature of the relationship with the community? Are there opportunities for parent participation in school activities? What proportion participate?

e. Are there opportuntiies for other groups to participate, e.g., civic and business associations? Are they helpful?

f. Is the school available to be used by the community? Describe the activities.

Section III: Indicators of Success

a. Of the students who graduated last year, approximately how many:

enrolled in a four year college or university	_____%
enrolled in a community college	_____%
enrolled in vocational training	_____%
found full-time employment	_____%
found part-time employment	_____%
enlisted in the military	_____%

Have any of these rates changed significantly e.g., by more then 10%, in the last three years? If so, please describe the changes and indicate why they occurred.

_____

_____

_____

_____

JOINING FORCES
SAMPLE

b. In your school, district, or state are there opportunities for student competition and/or recognition in any of the general program categories (listed in Section II, Question #1)? If so, please indicate the areas in which students from your school participated and what recognition they received.

c. What was the student drop-out rate during the last school year? Does the data appear to be accurate? Has this pattern been fairly consistent over the last three years? If not, how has it changed and why?

d. Aside from regular evaluation of student performance in classes, does your school have formal procedures for measuring student achievement? if so, please describe them, and in a format appropriate for your school, indicate the student results for each grade level from the last three years.

e. Does your state administer minimum competency tests or graudation tests? If so, describe in an appropriate format, the results for each content area for the last three years? How do the results compare to state averages? to neighboring schools?

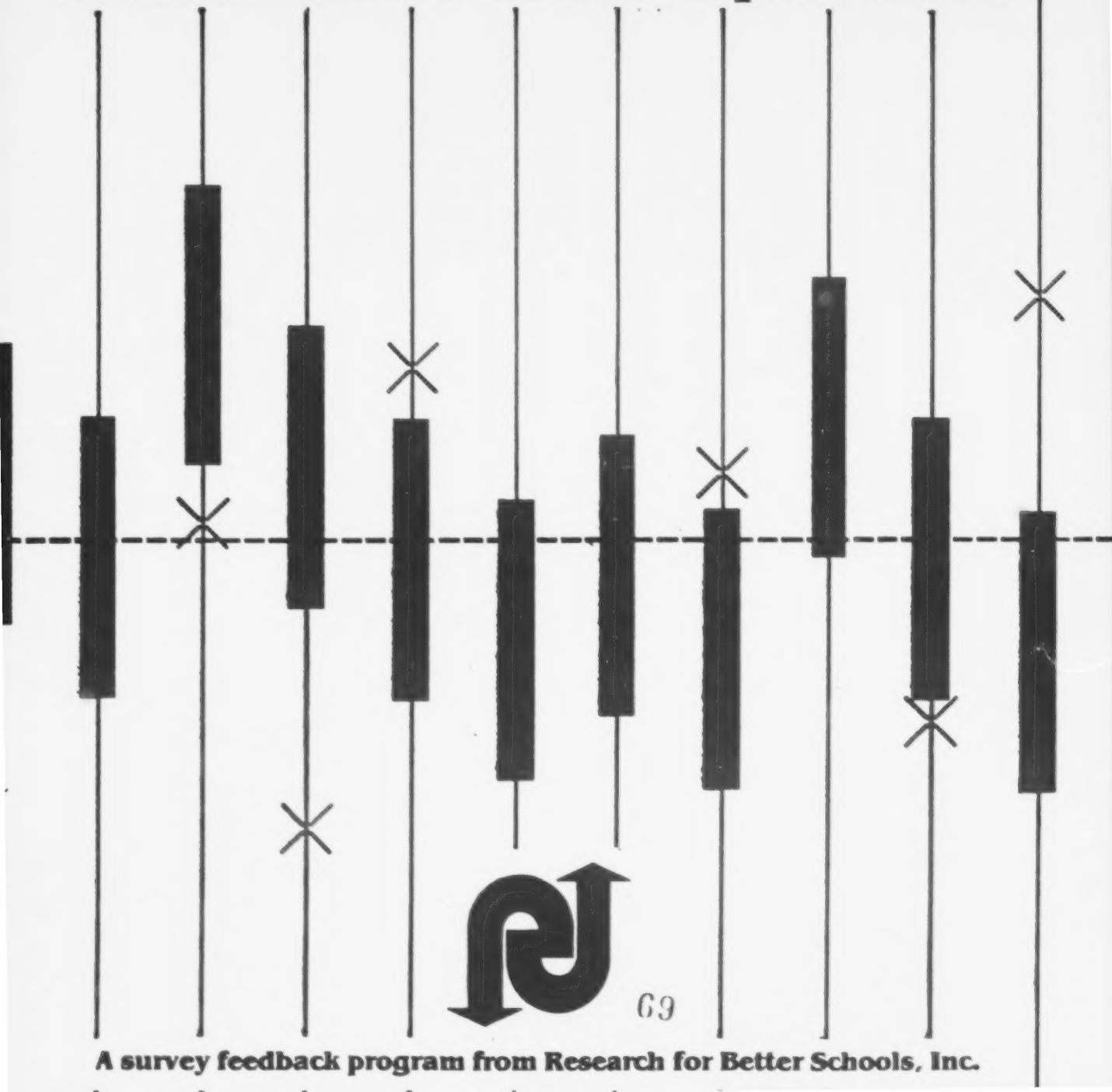
f. Please display the results on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for the past three years, indicating verbal and math scores by ginder (and race, if data is available).

g. Please display results, AP exams, for your school by subject area. Indiacte how many students took the tests.

JOINING FORCES
SAMPLE

School Assessment Survey

Information for School Improvement



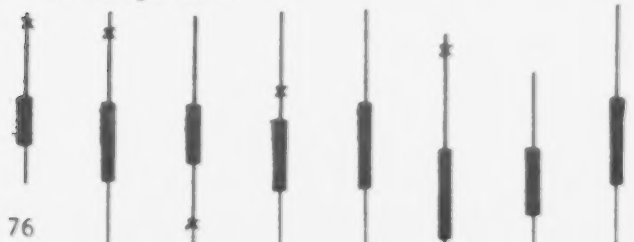
A survey feedback program from Research for Better Schools, Inc.

JOINING FORCES
SAMPLE

SAS:
SCHOOL ASSESSMENT SURVEY
INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Research for Better Schools (RBS), a private, non-profit educational R&D laboratory, has developed the SAS program — a survey approach to school-wide assessment of organizational conditions promoting effectiveness and improvement. SAS is:

- **Practical** — with variables selected by experienced trainers, administrators, and teachers involved in school improvement programs
- **Wide-ranging** — with nine dimensions covering a variety of school conditions including goal consensus, communication, influence, conflict, student discipline, leadership, and teaching
- **School-wide** — with data from a survey of all teachers
- **Norm-referenced** — with a questionnaire that has been used with close to 8,000 teachers in a sample of over 200 elementary and secondary schools and that allows you to compare your school with others
- **Graphic** — with results presented in ways that help you quickly identify strengths and weaknesses
- **Research-based** — using the literature on school effectiveness and school improvement
- **Valid** — based on three years of testing and development.



QUESTIONS ABOUT SAS

What is SAS?

SAS is a survey that measures the organizational conditions in elementary or secondary schools which promote school effectiveness and affect school improvement efforts.

Why Use SAS?

SAS provides concrete, school-by-school organizational climate information for staff development or long-term school improvement efforts that can be used independently of or complementary to state quality assessment studies.

When should you use SAS?

SAS can be used at any time, but it is particularly helpful:

- when embarking on a school or district improvement effort
- when planning yearly staff development activities
- when a new superintendent wishes to learn about his district
- in district long-range planning.

Who should use SAS?

SAS is a valuable tool for superintendents, central office administrators, and elementary or secondary school principals; although the data can be used by anyone who wishes a deeper understanding of his or her individual school or district.

Who completes the survey?

The SAS survey is completed by all teachers in an individual school in order to get a comprehensive picture of organizational conditions in that particular school.

How long does it take?

Easy to administer, quick to complete, SAS can be distributed by local school or district staff during a faculty meeting and filled out in about 30 minutes.

What does it cost?

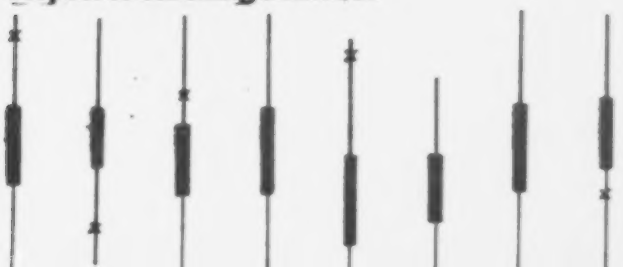
The SAS package can be offered to a school for a cost from $90 to $240, depending on the number of teachers in the school. Charges cover the costs of the survey instruments and preparation of an individualized school profile, item analysis, and written interpretation. For an additional fee, RBS will provide school improvement follow-up workshops and consultative advice. Schools are encouraged to use the data in conjunction with a larger development effort.

JOINING FORCES
SAMPLE

WHAT ARE THE NINE SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSIONS SAS EXAMINES?

Based on current research on organizational improvement and effectiveness, SAS analyzes nine important school climate dimensions:

- **Goal Consensus** — agreement among teachers about which student skills and characteristics should receive most attention for development
- **Facilitative Leadership** — actions of the principal that encourage and support the professional behavior of the teaching staff
- **Centralization of Influence: Classroom Instruction** — the principal's ability to get teachers to carry out his/her wishes with respect to teaching activities
- **Centralization of Influence: Curriculum and Resources** — the principal's ability to get teachers to carry out his/her wishes with respect to courses, schedules, staff assignments, and the allocation of resources
- **Vertical Communication** — the extent to which information about instruction is shared between teachers and administrators
- **Horizontal Communication** — the extent to which information about instruction is shared among teachers
- **Staff Conflict** — the frequency of disputes about school-related matters
- **Student Discipline** — the presence of an orderly environment in the school
- **Teaching Behavior** — teachers' actions that enhance the quality of instruction for all students in their classrooms.



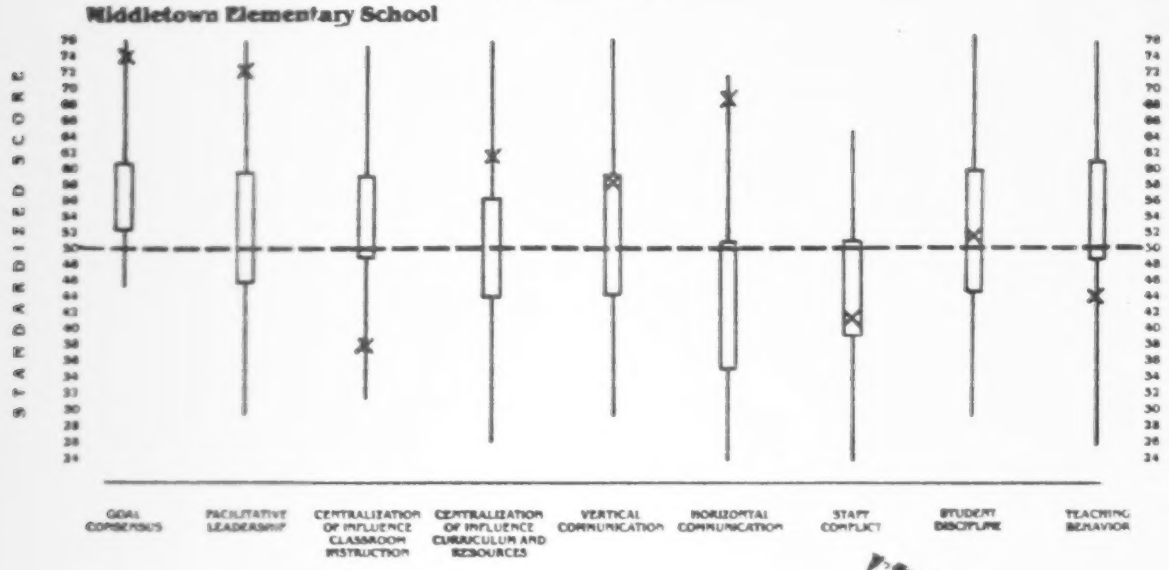
WHAT WILL THE SURVEY RESULTS LOOK LIKE?

Survey results for each individual school are presented in three ways: a profile, an item analysis, and a written summary.

A profile will graphically show each school's SAS scores for the nine school organizational dimensions. In this profile the box represents the scores for the middle 50 percent of the normed group, while the lines above and below the box represent the scores for the top and bottom 25 percent respectively. The "X" represents this school's scores. Using this profile, school staff and administration can:

- compare themselves to other similar schools
- compare one school climate dimension in their school with another.

(1) PROFILE



JOINING FORCES SAMPLE

(2) THE ITEM ANALYSIS

Middletown Elementary School Dimension 1: Goal Consensus

Rank	Striving for Excellence	Critical and Original Thinking	Basic Skills	Respect for Authority	Vocational Understanding and Skills	Understanding Others	Self-Esteem
	Percent of Teachers						
1	20	0	35	15	0	20	50
2	15	5	10	20	0	50	50
3	10	5	5	20	0	10	10
4	20	5	5	0	5	10	10
5	10	25	25	10	5	10	0
6	25	35	10	30	5	10	0
7	0	25	10	5	85	10	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Each of the nine school organizational dimensions in SAS is composed of five to eight questionnaire items. For example, for the "Goal Consensus" dimension, teachers are asked to rank order seven areas of student development:

(1) Striving for excellence
(2) Critical and original thinking
(3) Basic skills
(4) Respect for authority
(5) Vocational understanding and skills
(6) Understanding others
(7) Self-esteem

The **item analysis** illustrates numerically the distribution of teacher responses to all questionnaire items in each dimension.

SAMPLE

h. Please indicate the success rate of students failed the state graduation test or MCT and required remediation. What proportion eventually passed?

The data collection phase of **JOINING FORCES** has two major goals. The first is to collect valid information, information that reflects the school's reality -- how things really are (Nadler, 1977). The second goal is to "create and direct energy" (Burke, 1982, p. 199), because the information collected serves as the focal point for action and change. The results from this activity create a data base from which future activities will develop. Subsequent development activities will be based on information gathered during this phase of the process. During the council retreat, discussed in the next section, council members will study the data and make some priority decisions about what topics should be tackled first.

Compiling the School Profile is also the first task that the council undertakes as a working group. The data collection activities force the council to work together to complete a major task, thereby facilitating team building among the group.➨

The council retreat is time set aside for the Coordinating Council to study the completed School Profile and the results from the School Assessment Survey (SAS). It is recommended that the retreat be scheduled as a full-day activity away from the school with a meal provided, if possible. The retreat is an analysis and planning activity. It is task oriented with some clear outcomes.

There are three major objectives that must be met at the retreat: (1) the council reviews, discusses, and validates the data; (2) identifies, defines, and prioritizes those issues to be addressed by the development process; and (3) develops a plan for establishing task groups.

When the council begins looking at the completed profile, the information often confirms their feelings or surprises them. Questions begin to emerge: "Do people really think that?" "I don't believe teachers in this school feel that way." "This is what we really look like!" These kinds of questions and statements and the discussion which usually follows focuses the attention on the data and change goals begin to be seen more clearly. The best interpreters of the data are the people working in the schools.

The council members must then bring some structure to their discussions. They have to begin to make some tough decisions about which issues they will address, in which order, and by what date. These early decisions begin to create the direction of their school development program. By the end of the retreat, council members should have selected approximately five issues on which they will work. Criteria for selection should include urgency -- This topic is something critical, something that can't wait; feasibility -- In reality, can we do anything about this?; and visibility

-- Will working on this issue get us some schoolwide attention, some good public relations? Council members might also want to select an area because of its success quotient, something that's a sure winner, to show the school that the process can, indeed, work. An outside consultant can be very helpful at this point, both in helping keep retreat activities on track and in providing some training in prioritizing and planning techniques.*

Council, as its third major retreat activity, must lay the groundwork for the task-group formation. For each issue area selected, a task group must be created. Council members serve on task groups in a facilitative and liaison capacity, and in this case, in a start-up capacity. Each council member should select a task group on which to serve and develop plans for how to organize the group. Council members do not necessarily chair the task group, but at this stage, they do act as organizers.

By the end of the retreat, the council members should have:

- selected and defined their school improvement topics,
- assigned themselves to task groups,
- planned for task group formation, and
- developed a strategy for how to inform the rest of the school staff about council activities thus far.

Councils may benefit from an annual retreat at the start of the school year. It would be a way of reviewing past accomplishments as well as setting goals and future council activities. It can also serve to renew participant motivation and commitment.

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*Comprehensive problem-solving and prioritizing processes can be found in the What's a Plan Without a Process: A Training Handbook for Staff Work Groups, a publication of RBS, Inc., 1984.

What follows is a planning guide to help you organize your retreat and some sample retreat agendas.➡

Retreat Planning Guide

When planning your council retreat, consider the following issues.

1. Tentative date

2. Time

3. Does this date/time necessitate any schedule changes?

4. If yes, what do you need to do about this?

5. Availability of consultants/facilitators

6. Goals of the retreat (check those that are appropriate for your retreat)

_____ review school profile

_____ review SAS data

_____ share other relevant data

_____ identify and prioritize key issues

_____ develop task group formation strategy

_____ develop school communication strategy

7. State the goals of your retreat. _____

_____

_____

_____

8. What do you need to accomplish these goals? _____

_____

_____

_____

9. Who do you need to accomplish these goals? _____

_____

_____

_____

10. Has everyone been notified as to time, place, and purpose of this retreat?

LHS

COORDINATING COUNCIL RETREAT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1984

9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

SAMPLE AGENDA

Morning Activities

- Data Feedback
- Identification and Clarification of Issues
- Priority Setting

Lunch

Afternoon Activities

- Planning and Implementation Analysis
- Council Responsibilities

Adjourn

R School District

RHS Coordinating Council Retreat

Monday, November 21, 1983 Car-Tech Human Resources Center

Sample Agenda

8:30 am Coffee & Donuts - Welcome to the Retreat

9:00 am General Session - Reviewing the Data on RHS

- Survey Summary: What Our School is Like
- Results of the RHS School Climate Profile
- RHS and the Nation (The Boyer Report)

10:00 am Break

10:15 am Relating the Data to the Opportunities for Improvement

11:00 am Small-Group Session - Setting Priorities for Improvement

Group discussions and use of a formal process to identify three priority areas; recorders prepare report for General Session.

12:00 noon Lunch

1:00 pm General Session - Team Building on the Coordinating Council

1:30 pm General Session - Developing an Improvement Plan

- The Elements of an Improvement Plan
- Coordinating Priorities for the Plan
- Determining Who, When, How
- Taking the Plan Back to School: Communication and Planning

3:00 pm Final Comments; Questions and Answers

3:15 pm Adjourn

Retreat Agenda

Write your retreat agenda here.

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Up to this point in the development process, most of the activities have been centered on the Coordinating Council. Following the council retreat and the determination of those issues the process will address, the critical question of how to involve more people emerges. This is done through the formation of task groups.

Staff members are recruited to serve voluntarily on a problem-solving task group. Each task group addresses a specific issue as defined by the Coordinating Council. Council members also serve on task groups but in a liai , facilitative, and training capacity. Also, council members can help recruit new staff for the task groups.

The job of the task group is to: review and define the problem, explore solutions, select solutions, make recommendations to the Coordinating Council, and, if the recommendations are approved, assist in the implementation of the recommendations.

The task group is a short-term, sharply defined group. It is focused around the accomplishment of very specific goals. Its existence is linked to project completion, and its function is to bring about change in the school.

Task groups need some structure. A chairperson and a recorder of the minutes should be selected and some meeting times negotiated. Within this, however, participants have tremendous freedom to experiment with new roles, try new behaviors, and work out new ideas. New styles of communication often develop where there is more openness and, as a result, better information is available for problem solving.

Task groups should be organized to cut across personal organizational structures, such as departments, teams, grade levels, and so forth. This gives participants the opportunity to meet, get to know, and work with new people. This also gives participants a first-hand experience in learning about all the resources that are available in surprising places -- each other.

All staff members should be encouraged to serve on a task group. Some may even be specifically recruited. Desire to participate, interest in the topic, and expertise in the topic are all important criteria for participation and recruitment. When forming task groups, keep the following information in mind:

- Staff members should be contacted individually by a council liaison and asked to serve. A memo can be helpful, but nothing works as well as the personal touch.
- Be clear about expectations of the task, stressing the sharply focused goal and content and short-term nature of the activity.
- Let people know that by serving on a task group they are helping to shape the school's future.
- Task groups will not do well if their goal setting is unrealistic or if the groups are not clear about how their job relates to what the council is doing. Council members serving in task groups need to watch for this.
- Task groups will not do well if the council doesn't do its work. It's a set up for the task groups if the council doesn't request their recommendations and act upon them.
- Stress the team nature of the activity -- "We're in this together" -- the esprit de corps. When the task group meets, give yourself a name, team colors, a slogan, anything it takes to develop a sense of group identity.

When a task group feels it has completed its task, it should submit a written and oral report to the Coordinating Council who may have some questions or comments for the task group.

A task group report should include the following:

- topic/problem
- alternatives considered
- pro's and con's of each alternative
- proposed solution(s)
- rationale for proposed solution(s)

It is important that task group reports be taken seriously and reflect the hard work and energy of its members.

Not only is participation expanded in numbers during this step of the process but commitment to the process builds because action decisions are being made where there is agreement to do something new or differently and those decisions are being made by the very same people who are responsible for implementing them.➨

Action Strategy and Improvement Plan*

Developing action strategies is the road map to school improvement. Action strategies are statements of what it is you want to be -- here you want to go. They are also statements of how you are going to get there -- most effectively.

Both task group and Coordinating Council members contribute to developing action strategies -- the task groups when they make their recommendations and the council when it develops a schoolwide improvement plan. It would be to those groups' advantage to engage in a planning process that examines the issues described here.

Begin by asking yourself the general question, "What are we trying to be and to do?" "What are our general concerns?" Then ask yourself "What's going on around us, in our school, district, and community that affects our work?" This is called taking an environmental scan. Following your scan, make a general mission statement that answers the question, "What are we trying to do?" Analyze your situation by finding out what's already been done. When you've answered these questions, you're ready to begin to plan. But what do you plan to do?

Any plan or action strategy begins with a clear statement of goals and objectives you hope to achieve. Goals must be specific and realistic and stated in such a way that the results are observable. Objectives are the specific results you wish to attain within the goal. They are the specific

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*A comprehensive plamning process can be found in What's a Plan Without a Process: A Training Handbook for Staff Work Groups, a publication of RBS, Inc., 1984.

statements of what is to be done and include references to concrete activities. What do we plan to do, exactly?

The next step of the process is to develop strategies and activities for reaching the goals and objectives. Again, it is important to be as concrete and specific as possible. Any activity or strategy must directly relate to the goals and objectives.

Your school improvement plan should next address the question of "What do we need in order to carry out these activities, and what do we have available? Resources include people, materials, money, time, and so forth. Your plan should take into consideration how needed resources will be obtained.

"Who?" is the question that next needs to be answered. Decide who will have the major responsibility for each activity. A name must be associated with each activity.

As well as a name, a completion date must also be included. When setting time lines, consider questions such as "By when do certain tasks need to be completed?" "What tasks have to be done in sequence?" "Has adequate time been allowed?" "Are deadlines realistic?" A specific amount of time must be allotted for each activity.

The final step of any planning process includes evaluation. "Did we do what we set out to do?" and "How do we know it?" "What are our milestones/checks we need to include to monitor that tasks are being done properly and timely? A stated evaluation strategy within the overall plan gives you benchmarks to measure progress.

Action strategies and school improvement plans must be documented and can be done so in many different forms. Here is an example of one form you might want to use. Use one form for each goal.

Activity Planning Form

1. Goal Statement _____

2. Objectives	3. Activities	4. Resources	5. Constraints	6. Responsibilities	7. Time Lines	8. Evaluation

Presentation of Plan

The presentation of the institutional improvement plan is an important and rewarding feature of the preceding development activities. It is an opportunity for participants to communicate their ideas and achievement. The presentation should be made to the managerial level appropriate for the decision being requested. Some presentations will be made to the building-level administrators, others to the district superintendent. Still others may be made to the school board. For whomever the presentation is being planned, there are some general guidelines to remember.

The objectives of the presentation are to provide the appropriate decision makers with the results of the work accomplished thus far and recommendations for changes. The overall goal, however, is communication. Let your superintendent know the outcome of your work.

A face-to-face meeting is always better than a written recommendation, but a written report should always be available. Council members and/or task group members can be there to answer questions should they arise. In a meeting, those who participated in the work can be there to report on it and have their efforts recognized.

The meeting should be scheduled well in advance. The room should be in an area free from distractions and telephones. Whenever possible, the room should be set up ahead of time, with furniture and audio-visual equipment in place. Name cards may be useful when presenting in a situation where people might not know each other's names and introductions should be made at the start of the meeting.

Begin the meeting, following introductions, by reviewing the agenda. As many council/task group members as possible should be involved as speakers. Present your material.

- Charts that illustrate your analyses should be used. They make good impressions and they get the message across quickly.
- An advantage to flip charts is that as each chart is used, it can be hung on the walls for later referral by the speaker or others.
- Charts should be readable -- everyone in the room must be able to see it and read it. This is not the time for fine, small print.
- Use graphs whenever possible. They help the audience understand the message. The same is true for pictures.
- Stick to your agenda. Avoid distractions or off-the-topic discussions.
- KISS -- Keep It Simple and Sweet!
- If your recommendation includes any hardware or material object, if you can, bring them with you. That's a real effective way of getting the point across.
- Use handouts but don't distribute them until the exact moment you want to use them. The audience may decide to pay more attention to the handouts rather than to the speaker.
- Be specific -- talk in terms of dollars and cents and time lines. You've done your homework. This is the time to share it.

The management presentation is a serious meeting but it's always useful to remember a sense of humor. Enthusiasm should show. And a few smiles help especially in the relaxation department.

Speakers -- be prepared. Write out your notes ahead of time. For some, a rehearsal is a good idea. Try not to read your notes. Make some eye contact with your audience.

At the end of the presentation, some discussion might occur about the next project. Also, all participants should be acknowledged and thanked.

The decision makers are there to learn from you. Don't put them on the spot or shock them by demanding an immediate solution or response. No surprises, please. That will not be helpful for future relationships. Give them time to digest your recommendations, however, do ask when you might expect to hear their reactions and response to your proposals.

After you receive feedback about your presentations, be prepared to incorporate the feedback into your plan whenever possible. The decision makers may accept your proposals, they may not. If they do not accept your proposals, find out why.

The essence of this entire program is collaboration. The meeting where proposals are presented is one aspect of that collaboration. It is a time for dialogue about solutions for consensually arrived at problems. It is also a time for all parties involved to acknowledge their hard work.

The harder work is yet to come. After the proposal is approved and plans for implementation are underway, council and task group members have to guide that implementation.➡

Do you think it's been easy up to now? Because, if you do, you need to be warned. Now is when the work really begins.

Implementation means putting your action/improvement plan into effect. This is when Murphy's law usually emerges -- if anything can go wrong, it usually will at this point. Council members have important roles here. As internal resource people, they can guide and monitor the implementation process, continually checking to find out how things are going and where assistance may be required.

To assist the implementation process, it may make some sense to sort out in advance what is most likely to go wrong. This is called doing an implementation analysis*. Check out your action plans and ask yourself what can go wrong with them.

- What might go wrong?
- What might cause these future problems?
- What do we do to prevent these likely causes from occurring?
- If the problem does occur, what do we do to minimize the effects?

Another factor to be forewarned about is resistance. It is usually during implementation that resistance to the new plan rears its head. The attached handout outlines some general principles regarding resistance. Council members can use this outline as they guide implementation.

Council members also serve an important emotional function at this stage. During implementation, especially if things get sticky, people

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* A comprehensive approach to Implementation Analysis can be found in What's a Plan Without a Process?: A Training Handbook for Staff Work Groups, a publication of Research for Better Schools, Inc., 1984.

often get discouraged and depressed. Council members must cheer each other and task group members along, pointing out the light at the end of the tunnel and the value of the activities being implemented.➡

Resistance to Change*

Observations on sources of resistance within persons and within institutions can be summarized in some concise principles. These are not absolute laws but are based upon generalizations which are usually true and likely to be pertinent. The following principles suggest that resistance will be lessened based on who brings the change, what kind of change it is, and how it is best instituted.

- Who Brings the Change? -- Resistance will be less if:
  - -- Administrators, teachers, board members, and community leaders feel that the project is their own, not one devised and operated by outsiders.
  - -- The project clearly has wholehearted support from top officials of the system.
- What Kind of Change? -- Resistance will be less if:
  - -- Participants see the change as reducing rather than increasing their present burden(s).
  - -- The project is in accord with values and ideas which have long been acknowledged by participants.
  - -- The program offers the kind of new experience which interests participants.
  - -- Participants feel that their autonomy and security is not threatened.
- Procedures in Instituting Change -- Resistance will be less if:
  - -- Participants have joined in diagnostic efforts leading them to agree on what the basic problem is and to feel its importance.
  - -- The project is adopted by consensual group decision.
  - -- Proponents are able to empathize with opponents, recognize valid objections, and take steps to relieve unnecessary fears.

*Adapted from G. B. Watson, 1967.

-- It is recognized that innovations are likely to be misunderstood and misinterpreted, and if provision is made for feedback of perceptions of the project and for further clarification as needed.

-- Participants experience acceptance, support, trust, and confidence in their relations with one another.

-- The project is kept open to revision and reconsideration if experience indicates that changes would be desirable.➨

Evaluation

Evaluation is an integral part of the school development process. It provides information that allows participants to guide and improve the process and to inform others of program accomplishments and effects. Thus, evaluation helps improve the program and build support for it.

The evaluation process should be based on program objectives and should assess progress toward those objectives. However, it also should assess unanticipated consequences of the program. It needs to address three general questions: (1) Are you doing what you set out to do? (2) Based on what you set out to do, what is the nature and the effects of the results? (3) Are there unanticipated effects?

There are essentially four reasons to evaluate. They are:

- to determine progress toward the program objectives,
- to identify strengths and weaknesses of program activities so that activities can be improved,
- to establish a data base which school leaders can use as a public relations tool to demonstrate results of improvement activities, and
- to establish a source of information which can be used by school leaders as a basis for future decision making.

Each Coordinating Council must develop means of systematically assessing the effects of JOINING FORCES in its school. In addition to the reasons already discussed, this process permits the Coordinating Council:

- to identify areas of weak or inadequate implementation of improvement plans;
- to identify areas where the actions taken fail to reduce or eliminate the problem;
- to focus attention on unintended positive or negative consequences of actions taken; and

- to identify areas of success and gather such information for reports to the staff, the board, and the community.

The last function mentioned is important because evidence of progress is essential to maintaining staff commitment.

The evaluation process must be designed to assist program planners with the improvement of JOINING FORCES, demonstrate its effectiveness, and build support for it. The evaluation process should address issues such as:

- the functions of the Coordinating Council and staff perceptions of its leadership,
- staff/administrative relationships and the progress toward shared decision making,
- the effectiveness of communications between the Coordinating Council and the staff,
- staff perceptions of the assistance provided by external agencies,
- the extent of action plan implementation and the obstacles encountered,
- the degree of staff awareness of and commitment to the plan and the planning process,
- the way in which substantive problems are solved,
- the amount and nature of external support sought and received,
- the strength of the rationale for priorities, and
- the council's use of data on making decisions.

Let's look at the first of the two general evaluation questions, Are you doing what you set out to do?

This kind of evaluation is basically a program review. To perform this review, examine your improvement objectives and activities with the following questions in mind.

- Are the activities effective means to the objective?

- How is implementation working?
- Is the objective still an important priority?
- At this point, do you still think it's what you should be doing?
- Are any changes needed?

Here's an example. A task group worked all summer to revise the student discipline code. Before the opening of school, the revised code was reviewed with all staff and students. The objective was to implement the code at the beginning of the school year. It is now November. As council members, ask yourselves these questions:

- Are people using the code as expected? Are they enforcing the new code consistently?
- Do implementation problems exist? Do teachers agree with the new code? Are they ignoring it?
- What can be done to relieve these problems?
- Is classroom discipline still a priority?
- Is the implementation of the new discipline code having the desired result? What are the effects of the new code?
- Are classroom discipline problems being reduced?

Evaluation requires some systematic collection of data. Sources of data might include school records of attendance and disciplinary actions; surveys from staff, administrators, and students; and interviews with staff, administrators, and students. Trend data should be examined and it is helpful to have comparable data from other schools.

The chart which follows gives examples of data that might be collected to assess the effects of various school development activities. Also, some sample items for an evaluation survey of development activities are also attached.

Table 1

Sample Evaluation Data

Activity	Expected Outcome(s)	Evaluation Methods
New or revised discipline code	Improved student behavior	Trend data: data about disciplinary incidents (e.g.: suspensions, detentions). Interviews with administrators regarding their assessments of the policy's effects. Surveys of staff/students regarding their perceptions of improvements in discipline.
Remedial course/program	Improved student achievement	Trend data: standardized achievement test, grades, statewide tests. Surveys of staff/students regarding their perceptions of the usage and effects of the course/program.
Revised staff/student manuals	Improved understanding of school regulations/procedures	Surveys of staff/students regarding their manual's utility. Interviews with administrators/counselors regarding improvements in understanding of regulations/procedures.
Revised attendance regulations	Improved student attendance	Trend data: regarding attendance, latenesses, class cuts.

The following sample evaluation items might give you some ideas about ways you might develop evaluation items for your program. These particular sample questions refer to effects of implementation and behavior of the Coordinating Council.

JOINING FORCES SAMPLE

Sample Evaluation Survey Items

As you know, the Coordinating Council introduced a number of task groups to address major problems during the past year. The following items refer to some of those task groups. Please circle the appropriate responses.

1. To what extent do you think each task group was needed?

	Not at all			A great deal
a. Staff development session task groups in general	1	2	3	4
- classroom management	1	2	3	4
- emergency procedures	1	2	3	4
- curriculum fair	1	2	3	4
- drugs and alcohol	1	2	3	4
- computers	1	2	3	4
b. Curriculum task group	1	2	3	4
c. Staff manual task group	1	2	3	4
d. Discipline task group	1	2	3	4
e. Morale task group	1	2	3	4
f. New facilities task group	1	2	3	4

2. To what extent has each task group improved some aspect of the school?

	Not at all			A great deal
a. Staff development session task groups in general	1	2	3	4
- classroom management	1	2	3	4
- emergency procedures	1	2	3	4
- curriculum fair	1	2	3	4

TRAINING FORCES SAMPLE

	Not at all			A great deal
- drugs and alcohol	1	2	3	4
- computers	1	1	3	4
b. Curriculum task group	1	2	3	4
c. Staff manual task group	1	2	3	4
d. Discipline task group	1	2	3	4
e. Morale task group	1	2	3	4
f. New facilities task group	1	2	3	4

3. To what extent have task group-initiated changes been implemented effectively?

	Not at all			A great deal
a. Staff development session task groups in general	1	2	3	4
- classroom management	1	2	3	4
- emergency procedures	1	2	3	4
- curriculum fair	1	2	3	4
- drugs and alcohol	1	2	3	4
- computers	1	2	3	4
b. Curriculum task group	1	2	3	4
c. Staff manual task group	1	2	3	4
d. Discipline task group	1	2	3	4
e. Morale task group	1	2	3	4
f. New facilities task group	1	2	3	4

SAMPLE

4. Are there problems that you think the council/task groups should have addressed rather than some of the above? Yes ___ No ___ If "yes," please explain:

_____

_____

_____

5. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Coordinating Council.

	Disagree				Agree
a. The council allows the faculty to have more input into decisions affecting the school.	1	2	3	4	5
b. In general, the current members of the council represent my point of view about improving the school.	1	2	3	4	5
c. I can go to council members with suggestions or problems.	1	2	3	4	5
d. I feel that council members will act upon the suggestions or problems that I take to them.	1	2	3	4	5
e. The administration of this school listens to the council's suggestions and cooperates with putting them into effect.	1	2	3	4	5
f. The administration's involvement with the council does not substantially reduce its effectiveness with the staff.	1	2	3	4	5

Council Evaluation

Another aspect of evaluation that the council may want to consider is the assessment of the council's effectiveness. How well has the council been operating? Since the council's operation is so vital to the success of Joining Forces, it may be very appropriate for the council to assess itself.

This can occur in one of two ways. It can happen informally with periodic checks: "Hey, how are we doing?" or "Let's talk for a minute about what we've accomplishing and how well we're working together." It can also happen more formally, with the council putting aside some time to systematically review its operations, assess its strengths and areas of concern, and set goals for its development.

Attached are some sample group evaluation surveys that your council may want to use when assessing its own development.➨

JOINING FORCES SAMPLE

Rating Council Effectiveness

A. GOALS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Confused; diverse; conflicting; indifferent; little interest.

Clear to all; shared by all; all care about the goals; feel involved.

B. PARTICIPATION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Few dominate; some passive; some not listened to; several talk at once or interrupt.

All get in; all are really listened to.

C. FEELINGS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Unexpected; ignored or criticized.

Freely expressed; empathetic responses.

D. DIAGNOSIS OF GROUP PROBLEMS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Jump directly to remedial proposals; treat symptoms rather than basic causes.

When problems arise the situation is carefully diagnosed before action is proposed; remedies attack basic causes.

E. LEADERSHIP

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Group needs for leadership not met; group depends too much on single person or on a few persons.

As needs for leadership arise various members meet them ("distributed leadership"); anyone feels free to volunteer depending upon group needs.

JOINING FORCES
SAMPLE

F. DECISIONS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Needed decisions don't get made; decision made by part of group; others uncommitted.

Consensus sought and tested; deviates appreciated and used to improve decision; decisions when made are fully supported.

G. TRUST

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Members distrust one another, are polite, careful, closed, guarded; they listen superficially but inwardly reject what others say; are afraid to be criticized.

Members trust one another; they reveal to group what they would be reluctant to expose to others; they respect and use the responses they get; they can freely express negative reactions without fearing reprisal.

H. CREATIVITY AND GROWTH

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Members and group in a rut; operate routinely; persons stereotyped and rigid in their roles; no progress.

Group flexible, seeks new and better way; individuals changing and growth; creative individually supported.

SAMPLE

Evaluation of Council Effectiveness

Rate the group on each statement below with four representing your highest agreement and one representing your lowest agreement with the statement.

Circle the number that best approximates your rating of the behavior exhibited by the group.

1.	Group members understood the problem under discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Group members stayed on the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Group members avoided premature closure on discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Group members contributed equally to the discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Group members agreed with group consensus and/or decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Group members discussed their opinions openly without hiding personal feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Group members were able to resolve conflict or discontent.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Group members displayed commitment to the group tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Group members indicated satisfaction with the group process.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Group members indicated satisfaction with the group outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5

When designing overall school development evaluation, keep the following questions in mind:*

- Who are the audiences for the evaluation?

  The staff, the students, the parents, the board, and the superintendent are possible audiences. There may be separate audiences for different aspects of the evaluation and in some cases the Coordinating Council may be the only audience.

- What will the audiences want to know about the program? What information will be useful for program planning? What information will convince other audiences of its success?

  Defining the issues to be addressed requires an understanding of the questions that are important to the audiences. Important issues may include these kinds of questions:

  - Was the plan implemented? If not, why not?

  - What did the activities cost in dollars, staff time, materials, and student time?

  - What were the outcomes of the actions taken? Were there changes in staff behavior, in school climate, in student behavior, in time use, in student achievement, and so forth?

  - What were the discrepancies between the planned actions and those realized? How does one account for these discrepancies?

  - How do staff and students feel about the actions taken and the planning process used?

- What evidence should be collected?

  Evidence includes descriptive information (What happened? When? Who was involved? What were the results?) and judgmental evidence (How do various groups feel about the actions? Did the components succeed or fail?) Both types are important. Attention must also be given to the quality of the evidence. The most important aspect of quality is the relevance of the evidence to the issues or questions important to the audience.

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*Adapted from NJEA, SET, 1981.

- How should the data be collected?

  Availability of the evidence is important in order to reduce the "cost" of the evaluation. Wherever possible, information collected for other purposes by teachers and the administration should be used. In addition, data can be collected from routine task group progress reports, staff and student questionnaires, interviews and conversations, observations of specific situations, anecdotal information, and materials used in the activities.

- How should the data be analyzed?

  The most appropriate forms of analysis for the school-level documentation are comparisons of conditions in the school from one time to another. Data on student achievement, absenteeism, disciplinary problems, parental involvement, and staff turnover are examples of data that can be compared over time. Two other types of comparisons can be made: comparisons between intentions stated in the plan and actual accomplishments and comparisons with conditions in similar schools.

- How should the results be reported?

  The Coordinating Council should prepare regular reports for the school staff from the task groups' progress reports. These reports will help keep track of the implementation effort. Annually these reports should be combined with other data to produce a report for the school district on the progress of Joining Forces. It is important to make regular reports because they help maintain the visibility of the efforts being made in the school. This builds commitment to the overall process.➡

This process is a circular one. Evaluation will produce information which will assist the council in its planning. New plans will be created. New task groups will have to be organized. New people will become involved. New people means fresh ideas and new perspectives.

Thus, the growth and development process forges on. Always, the focus is on a better school; a better school in which to learn, a better school in which to teach.

JOINING FORCES attempts to build new relationships among the administrators, the faculty, and the support staff. It is a relationship based on trust and responsibility.

It also assumes that problem solving and planning at the building level are associated with successful implementation of improvement efforts. Full implementation is more likely to occur when staff members have been involved in that problem solving and planning.

Central office staff have a role here, also. It is important that there be support from central office. Active approval from district leadership is needed if the program, which takes time and resources, is to succeed.

Finally, this program is not a "project." It is a new way of managing and a new way of working together. It's not a "one-shot deal." It's a new approach and structure for solving problems and planning innovation.

All of us must be willing to take some risks, try some new ways of doing business, and be responsible for the outcomes.

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